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26th plenary meeting
Thursday, 28 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 107 (*continued*)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

The Acting President: Before we proceed, I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to three minutes when speaking in their national capacity, as stipulated in resolution 71/287. As members will recall, in its resolution 71/323, of 8 September 2017, the General Assembly called for strict adherence by each speaker to the time limits in the Assembly, in particular during high-level meetings. This will enable maximum participation within the limited time available for this meeting. Participants with longer statements are encouraged to read a shorter version of their text and to submit their full statements to the Secretariat for posting on the PaperSmart portal.

Also in accordance with resolution 71/323, the "all protocol observed" principle, whereby participants are encouraged, in the interest of time, to refrain from the listing of standard protocol expressions during their statements, is recommended. In the light of that given time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum. May I appeal to all speakers for their cooperation in observing the time limit of their statements, so that all those inscribed will be heard in a timely manner.

I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Holmes (Canada): Canada applauds the ongoing efforts of the General Assembly and Member States to address the complex global issue of trafficking in persons, including through the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We are committed to this fight both at home and abroad. Canada was among the first countries to ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Since its ratification, Canada has made significant progress in its fight against trafficking in persons. Strong criminal laws are in place to prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons, which is punishable by severe penalties up to life imprisonment, and federal legislation enshrines rights for all. Canada launched its national action plan to combat human trafficking, which consolidated efforts to combat the crime into a comprehensive approach using prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada is currently finalizing an extensive evaluation of its national plan. The results of that study will inform us of the best way forward on this important issue.

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In the area of prevention, we have continued to develop information and outreach programmes that target the most at-risk populations, including aboriginal women and girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons, youth and/or runaways, foreign workers and those who are economically disadvantaged.

In terms of prosecutions, we have made significant progress in addressing our criminal-justice responses to trafficking crimes through targeted training and various reforms. Those actions have resulted in more convictions and a better understanding of the issue among criminal-justice practitioners.

In terms of victim protection, the Government of Canada continues to work with its domestic partners, including provincial and territorial Governments and non-governmental organizations.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to highlight one initiative that I believe will be of interest to States parties, which was launched in 2016. Project Protect is a joint initiative between the Government of Canada and the private sector, allowing Canadian financial institutions to report transactions that are suspected to involve money-laundering related to trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation. In 2016, compared to the same four-month period in 2015, the Project produced a 400 per cent increase in financial-intelligence disclosures to law enforcement linking money-laundering to trafficking in persons.

In addition to our domestic efforts, Canada continues to work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Organization for Migration and INTERPOL, among other international partners, to provide technical assistance and capacity-building, enabling countries to successfully address trafficking in persons.

Acknowledging that trafficking is a crime that disproportionately affects women and girls, our new feminist international assistance policy will address the unacceptably high rates of sexual and gender-based violence experienced by women and girls, including those in situations of human trafficking. In addition, Canada is making strides to eradicate trafficking in persons from the production of goods and provision of services. As part of this, we are expanding our code of conduct for procurement to ensure that the Government of Canada's supply chains are free of trafficking in persons.

The role of civil-society organizations in combating trafficking in persons cannot be understated. These organizations, which are often the first point of contact for victims, carry out important advocacy on their behalf and provide important knowledge, skills and expertise, particularly in the realm of victim care, support and rehabilitation.

In conclusion, Canada urges the widest possible ratification and implementation of the United Nations Protocol, as it is the key international instrument guiding countries in the fight against trafficking in persons. Canada is committed to collaborating with the United Nations and all countries in order to prevent this crime, bring those who commit it to justice and help survivors go on to lead healthy and productive lives.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Heydarov (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to express my warm greetings and my gratitude to the Assembly for the opportunity to discuss this issue.

As a pioneer and one of the region's most active and progressive countries in preventing human trafficking, as long ago as 2003 the Republic of Azerbaijan ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The three national action plans for 2004, 2009 and 2014, formulated and approved by our Head of State, have played a major role in the complex and systematic struggle against human trafficking in our country. At the Government level, we have adopted a national referral mechanism and rules for identifying and rehabilitating victims of human trafficking, placing them in specialized institutions and repatriating them to their own countries.

In order to coordinate the Government agencies, civil-society organizations and foreign partners working to combat human trafficking, we have established a national coordination agency and an inter-agency commission. With the goal of implementing our national action plan, through our council for State support to non-governmental organizations, under the direction of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, we have funded more than 50 projects.

Within the Ministry of the Interior, we have set up a special police unit to combat human trafficking,

as well as a Government assistance centre, fund and hot line for victims. During this period, Interior Ministry agencies have identified more than 19,000 cases of human trafficking and forced labour, and have prosecuted more than 200 criminal groups and brought to justice 495 criminals. Overall, 774 victims of such crimes have been successfully reintegrated into society. All the victims have been granted the right to compensation, recovery time and a period of reflection, as well as permission to obtain residence permits and assurance of non-punishment. They have all also been provided with legal, medical, psychological and other forms of assistance and returned to normal life.

In conclusion, I would like to express my confidence that every country participating in today's meeting will continue to contribute to our fight against human trafficking, and I wish them every success.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Latvia.

Ms. Vilde (Latvia): Human trafficking affects millions of people every year on every continent. This shameful crime is a highly organized and lucrative business. It is also a gross violation of human rights that mostly affects women and children. Latvia is firmly committed to combating this heinous crime and has developed a strong legal framework for addressing trafficking in human beings through severe punishment based on the relevant United Nations, European Union and Council of Europe legal instruments. At the same time, we have enacted legislation on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking. Latvia also recently signed the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, another area of great concern.

Latvia's national strategy for the prevention of trafficking in human beings in the period from 2014 to 2020 is based on the four Ps — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership — and addresses current risks and trends. As a country of origin of victims of human trafficking, especially young women, Latvia pays particular attention to combating trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, as well as labour exploitation and fictitious marriage. Our law-enforcement agencies work in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations in identifying and assisting Latvian and third-country nationals subjected to trafficking for the purpose of exploitation.

Transnational inter-institutional cooperation involving public and private partnership is a core pillar for achieving results in this fight. Raising public awareness and understanding about the risks that lead to human trafficking, in cooperation with media and information communication technology companies, must be a priority.

So-called sham marriages between Latvian citizens and third-country nationals, arranged in other countries with the sole purpose of obtaining a European Union residence permit, have been a serious concern for the Latvian Government in the past few years. Latvia is a part of a regional awareness-raising campaign, involving several European countries, on preventing human trafficking and sham marriages. The project provides regional training for multidisciplinary groups of experts and practitioners, as well as informative activities for raising awareness on the issue. As a result, the number of Latvian citizens in such fictitious marriages abroad has fallen substantially.

An individual- and victim-centred approach that takes victims' needs and best interests into consideration must be our priority. Latvia provides State-funded assistance to victims of trafficking, including social and psychological rehabilitation services, safe shelter, legal aid, compensation, medical treatment, special protection and access to education and the labour market. Non-governmental organizations are involved in all stages, from reporting to identification and victim assistance. Close cooperation between law enforcement, the judiciary and victim service providers should be further facilitated. It is also important to consider how to improve victims' reintegration after they have received services.

Trends in human trafficking are constantly changing and affect every country. Given the transnational nature of this crime, national efforts are not enough. Based on our own experience, it is important for countries of origin to work closely with those of transit and destination to fight this crime together.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea.

Mr. Komara (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Government of Guinea on the occasion of this high-level meeting to consider the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

My delegation strongly welcomes the Assembly's adoption yesterday of the political declaration on the

implementation of the Global Plan of Action (resolution 72/1), which should help to speed up our fulfilment of our commitments to combating trafficking in persons. We thank partners for their continuing support to the major legislative reform efforts aimed at creating a legal framework for the protection of human rights.

The Republic of Guinea has expressed its willingness to combat this scourge by ratifying the main international, regional and subregional legal instruments for the protection of human rights, in particular the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its additional Protocols, as well as the multilateral agreement of the Economic Community of West African States on combating human trafficking. Strengthening international cooperation in preventing and eliminating trafficking should be one of our priorities in eradicating this scourge.

Guinea is a country of origin, transit and destination for victims of human trafficking, a situation that has encouraged my Government to take a number of measures. We have strengthened our institutional framework for combating human trafficking by establishing a national committee to combat human trafficking and related practices, and developing an emergency plan of action with a budget that includes training judges and security forces and a nationwide awareness-raising campaign. The law on organization of the judiciary and the new criminal code, which transfers criminal jurisdiction from courts of appeal to trial courts, is now in force. We have strengthened our cooperation with neighbouring countries, such as Mali, as part of the fight against trafficking in children. In November, six countries of the subregion will sign a cooperation agreement. We also have a document evaluating our national mechanisms for the care of victims of human trafficking.

I cannot conclude my statement without first asking our technical and financial partners to continue supporting my country in its efforts to combat the exploitation of human beings in all its forms.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Finland.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): Finland considers trafficking in persons a grave human rights violation and a serious global problem. It undermines the principles of a democratic society, the rule of law and respect for human dignity. In order to tackle human trafficking, and all the forms of criminal networks and organized crime connected to it, it is crucial that we work together at the international, regional and local levels with a variety of stakeholders, whether authorities, non-governmental organizations or other actors. We consider today's meeting to be essential for highlighting the continuing need for wide cooperation and commitment in combating trafficking in persons. International obligations and best practices make it clear that all counter-trafficking efforts require a holistic approach.

Finland has ratified the international agreements related to trafficking in human beings and translated them into national legislation, and has been taking part in monitoring their implementation within, for example, the United Nations and Council of Europe frameworks. In the past few years we have worked to improve our national system's ability to prevent trafficking, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. We have appointed a national anti-trafficking coordinator in order to improve our inter-agency cooperation. The national rapporteur on trafficking, who maintains an independent role and reports directly to Parliament, remains an important part of the system.

There is still a lot we can do to better prevent, protect and prosecute. Identifying the victims is a priority but continues to be a challenge in Finland, especially where victims of sexual exploitation are concerned. The authorities often find it hard to reach victims living on the margins of society, sometimes as undocumented migrants. Civil society has a central role to play in finding and assisting them. Developing functional partnerships is therefore a key element of our anti-trafficking strategy. Most of the trafficking victims we find are victims of sexual exploitation; about half of all victims detected are women and a fifth are girls. As a human rights violation, trafficking requires a human-rights-based approach, and special attention should be paid to the gendered nature of such crimes. The specific needs of women, girls and victims of sexual exploitation and abuse must be taken into account in developing assistance systems.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Human trafficking and modern slavery are among the biggest human rights scandals of our time. They are an affront to the public conscience, constitute grave violations of human rights law and are a serious obstacle to

sustainable development. They directly affect 46 million people worldwide.

With the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, we have agreed on an international definition of the crime of trafficking in persons. The Protocol provides a legal framework to effectively prevent and combat all forms of trafficking in persons, including the exploitation of others' prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude and the removal of organs. While the Trafficking in Persons Protocol has been widely ratified, it still lacks the universal acceptance that would enable it to exert its full potential. We hope that this goal will be achieved soon. Liechtenstein has been a strong advocate for its universality, in the context, among others, of the Universal Periodic Review, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council.

Law enforcement and criminal justice are key dimensions in our common fight against human trafficking and modern slavery. A comprehensive response on the part of the international community, including to new and emerging challenges, also requires strong cooperation in other aspects. We therefore welcome the fact that the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development addresses the issue in three of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals — Goals 5, on gender equality, 8, on decent work and economic growth, and 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies. We have established a collective understanding that combating modern slavery and the trafficking of persons is intimately linked to sustainable development efforts, peace and security, and human rights. We had hoped for a more ambitious political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) for this high-level meeting, one that would reflect the need for comprehensive policy responses. In that regard, we consider the Declaration rather a missed opportunity.

Human trafficking and modern slavery are complex phenomena. Nationally, we in Liechtenstein have identified two areas for focusing our engagement. First, we aim to strengthen accountability, including through the involvement of international criminal justice mechanisms. There is a customary norm of international law against slavery, and enslavement is listed as a crime against humanity in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Secondly, we have used the expertise and knowledge of our financial centre, particularly our financial intelligence unit, to adapt existing tools to fight money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, which can also help us in the fight against human trafficking by following the money. Those efforts are particularly relevant, because modern slavery is one of the big illegal business models of our day, generating more than $150 billion annually.

The United Nations can be an ideal platform for forming the necessary partnerships among the various United Nations bodies, as long as awareness of the common cause, a cooperative spirit and a commitment to a complementarity of effort prevail. That will enable our Organization to attract the support of Government and private-sector and civil-society entities that are committed and ready to invest in our shared fight.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Japan.

Mr. Hoshino (Japan): On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to welcome the convening of this high-level meeting, which provides a great opportunity for Member States, United Nations entities and civil society to evaluate the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime as well as a grave violation of human dignity and integrity. The nexus between it and terrorism has recently become a matter of deep concern, and terrorist groups are using trafficking in persons as a tactic of fund-raising and recruitment, as the Security Council highlighted last year with its adoption of resolution 2331 (2016). That new development is helping to prolong and exacerbate conflict and instability. Member States have the shared responsibility to eliminate this crime. Japan welcomes the fact that Member States at this high-level meeting are demonstrating our strong political will to take decisive and concerted action to end this heinous crime wherever it may occur.

The fight against trafficking in persons is one of the most important policy areas for the Government of Japan. The Government takes comprehensive and holistic measures with effective coordination among relevant agencies based on its 2014 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. As required by that Action Plan, the Government follows up on its implementation by issuing an annual report with a

view to broadly providing information on the measures taken by the Government and to raise awareness among citizens.

In addition to our efforts at the national level, building strong partnerships with various international and regional stakeholders is also of interest to us. In that regard, Japan has been holding an annual Japan-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) strategic policy dialogue since 2013. Enhancing law-enforcement capacity around the world to combat trafficking in persons is one of the priorities of that cooperation, and we are delighted to see experts from Japan playing a central role in implementing various anti-trafficking projects developed by UNODC, particularly in South-East Asian countries.

Japan has also been providing technical assistance for prevention, victim protection and rehabilitation measures through the Japan International Cooperation Agency and in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration. We also welcome the fact that the Japan-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Integration Fund has been utilized to implement projects to address this crime.

I take this opportunity to note that Japan became a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol on Trafficking in Persons on 11 July 2017. Since then, in September, Japan participated in the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons as a State party to the Protocol. As these international instruments play a central role in the fight against trafficking in persons, Japan is committed to engaging fully in the process of establishing a mechanism for the review of the implementation of these instruments and to further strengthening cooperation with other countries.

I would like to conclude my statement by expressing our commitment to continuing to take practical steps to address this issue in line with the Global Plan of Action and relevant Sustainable Development Goals, in close cooperation with other Member States, the relevant United Nations organizations and civil society.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Cabo Verde.

Mr. Fialho Rocha (Cabo Verde): Trafficking in persons is a matter of concern for the Government of Cabo Verde in many respects. It represents a real threat to human dignity and to human development. It is a denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is a source of wounds and suffering for its victims. It is also a crime committed by perpetrators who deserve to be treated with no mercy by national and international law enforcement. Finally, it requires a global and political response.

Moreover, it is our view that preventing and combating trafficking in persons is an endeavour that must bring together all related Sustainable Development Goals, namely, those with respect to poverty eradication, quality education, decent work, reduced inequalities, and promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies, combined, in addition, with measures for safe and regular migration and safe tourism free of sexual exploitation. The strides made to address these phenomena should be gender-sensitive and responsive, with policies aimed at combating all forms of discrimination, forced labour, sexual exploitation and abuse, and all forms of violence against women and girls.

To combat trafficking in persons, Cabo Verde first endorsed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and related Protocols. Secondly, Cabo Verde criminalized trafficking through its domestic legislation. Thirdly, my country implemented institutional and operational responses.

Nevertheless, with its limited resources and with a large maritime area under its jurisdiction to control, Cabo Verde underlines the need to expand the means allocated to implement policies and programmes that might end this scourge. Appropriate and timely international cooperation on capacity-building, technical assistance and support for operational programmes at the country level can make a difference by providing bold responses against trafficking in persons and other related transnational organized crimes.

That is precisely the spirit of the political declaration adopted at this high-level meeting of the General Assembly in its opening segment (resolution 72/1). We reaffirm that global financing to prevent and fight human trafficking needs to be increased and improved. That is also how we can pave the way for the effective implementation of the 2010 United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Let me conclude by underlining the fact that, as we move further into the twenty-first century, human beings are still capable of trafficking people, of modern forms of slavery and other related crimes. We have said before and repeat that these are crimes against humanity

and that they remain unpunished. It is therefore in our hands to leave no one behind in the trafficking trap, if we can join our wills, our hands and our means in a global strategy for this purpose. The strategy exists already through the Global Plan of Action. It is up to all of us to implement it successfully.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Chile.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network (see A/72/PV.24).

As a country of origin, destination and transit in the trafficking in persons, Chile has not escaped the sad reality of human trafficking. That is why, following the international guidelines set forth in the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, my country has developed a complete and comprehensive public State policy that includes the axes of prevention, persecution and assistance for victims. Two national anti-trafficking plans, adopted in 2011 and 2015, and the training of nearly 2,000 public officials in detection and prosecution demonstrate the permanence of our policy and the determination to continue to promote it.

In the second plan, for the period from 2015 to 2018, we have made progress in fundamental ways to address this multidimensional phenomenon, such as broad recognition of the rights of victims and of the need to improve and deepen coordination in terms of prevention and prosecution, and the incorporation of indicators for monitoring programme implementation. That is relevant if we consider that in Chile there have not been not a great many formalized cases of trafficking in persons since its classification as a crime in 2011. At the national level, only 29 cases and 206 victims were registered between 2011 and 2016.

Since the classification of the crime of smuggling migrants, that joint work has produced concrete results. Mmanuals for prevention, detection and persecution have been produced, and there are specific actions to provide care and reparation for victims.

In the international sphere, Chile has worked to promote cooperation with countries of the Latin American and Carribean region, as well as at the subregional level with the Southern Common Market and the Union of South American Nations, and at the hemispheric level with the Organization of American States. Bilaterally, we work with Argentina, Colombia, the United States and Peru. Today, we are moving forward in planning cooperation with the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

We also recognize the importance of concerted global action in the framework of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, in Vienna, the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We aspire to deepen and integrate those actions and to develop spaces of coordination and dialogue with these institutions.

Chile favours vigorous progress along those lines. Thus we systematically support the achievement of a transparent, inclusive, non-invasive and impartial international instrument. Along with measuring the level of compliance of States, it would also indicate the extent to which that compliance has led to progress towards the ultimate objectives of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Costa Rica.

Mr. Mendoza-García (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica endorses the statement made by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network (see A/72/PV.24), and we highlight the importance of the focus on placing the individual at the centre in prevention, protection and fighting trafficking in persons.

Children still make up one third of victims at the global level, and women and girls 71 per cent, according to the latest report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. For that reason, any strategy to combat trafficking must take into account the factors that increase the risks to our children, as well as a gender perspective that will assist us in designing specific actions to increase the effective protection of those vulnerable populations.

In addition, one of the major challenges is to improve data collection, given that trafficking extends throughout the world, with millions of victims and a large number of cases remaining hidden. There have been major efforts to criminalize this human rights violation, as reflected in the fact that 88 per cent of countries have classified it as a criminal offence.

Unfortunately, when it comes to carrying out the laws, the sentencing rates are still low, with only 9,071 sentences reported globally in 2016.

We should recall that trafficking in persons is commonly associated with trafficking in organs, drugs and arms, and with money-laundering and other activities of organized crime. That is why a comprehensive, coordinated focus is needed to fight all of those crimes and to coordinate actions in the fight against the supply and demand.

A final challenge is support for victims. In many cases that is still inadequate, and we need policies and programmes that allow human-trafficking survivors to rebuild their lives and prevent revictimization. Since 2013, Costa Rica has had a law to combat trafficking in persons, and we have been struggliing to fight this scourge through a national coalition addressing it in a comprehensive and inter-institutional manner.

For our country, the fight against trafficking must begin with awareness in all sectors. We have designed programmes to that end for the most relevant public officials and institutions, ranging from the police who conduct raids to the judges who hear cases. We have also involved civil society and the business sector, which play a fundamental role in the prevention and combat of trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Moreno González (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Egypt yesterday on behalf of the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking (see A/72/PV.24).

The Constitution of Ecuador expressly prohibits slavery, exploitation, servitude and the trafficking of persons. It recognizes the State's role in adopting measures for the prevention and eradication of human trafficking and for the protection and social reintegration of victims of human trafficking and other forms of violations of liberty.

My country has made major progress in implementing its national plan to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and other forms of exploitation and prostitution. In that plan the axes of action are prevention, promotion of rights, assistance and the comprehensive protection of victims, as well as investigation, punishment and the strengthening of international cooperation in order to effectively fight trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, in line with the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Our plan is implemented in an integral manner through an inter-institutional committee with a multidimensional focus and with competencies in the social, health, educational, productive, security, legal and social control spheres.

Ecuador is party to the international instruments in this area. Therefore, the comprehensive criminal code, which has been in force since 2014, classifies and punishes trafficking in persons as a grave violation of human rights. The penalization of the crime is consistent with the provisions of the Palermo Protocol and in some aspects is a greater guarantor, because it broadens the scope of the forms of exploitation subject to punishment.

In the interests of time, I would like to touch on only some of the main successes in the different axes of action, such as the guarantee of special protection, assistance for victims of trafficking and migrant-smuggling and restitution of their rights, and protecting the safety and privacy of victims and their family. The legislation classifying human trafficking as a crime applies the principle of the non-punishability of victims, which guarantees that a victim of trafficking is not to be criminally tried or punished for any infraction committed during the time that he or she was trafficked.

Another major step forward is the elimination of the need to prove the means leading to the crime — deception, fraud, threat and coercion. That makes it easier for the justice system to prove the existence of the crime.

In the area of alliances and international coordination, Ecuador, recognizing that 94 per cent of the victims in Latin America are captured, moved and exploited either within the country of origin or in the region, acts in conjunction with neighbouring countries and countries in the region to develop preventive actions, break up criminal networks, rescue victims, and encourages various initiatives at the bilateral and regional levels.

The interrelation between trafficking and migration is another vital topic. Ecuador is a country of origin, transit, destination and return of persons in mobility. For that particular reason, we have seen the need for a new framework to strengthen the mechanisms to protect

the rights of those persons. We have adopted policies and specific national actions to prevent and punish any practice related to the trafficking and smuggling of migrants and to guarantee the restitution and comprehensive reparation of the victims' rights. That includes the development of protocols, inter-institutional coordination at the regional and international levels and prevention programmes, among other things.

Ecuador is grateful to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this high-level meeting, making it possible for us to evaluate and advance the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking, and we applaude the adoption of the poltical declaration (resolution 72/1) yesterday. It is essential to strengthen the political will of all States to end this criminal activity, which undermines human dignity and has negative effects on development, peace and security, and human rights. Ecuador reiterates its unwavering will in the fight against this crime, as well as its commitment to resolutely support the processes and measures that are carried out in this context.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Mongolia.

Mr. Sukhee (Mongolia): At the very outset, let me express my delegation's sincere gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for convening in a timely manner this important high-level meeting to assess the implementation of Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is designed to produce a renewed political will and commitments to end the heinous crime of human trafficking.

Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and development. Poverty, unemployment, lack of socioeconomic opportunities, gender-based violence, discrimination and marginalization are some of the contributing factors that make persons vulnerable to human trafficking in developing countries.

Regarded as a source and, to a lesser extent, a destination country, Mongolia is not immune to human trafficking. Mongolia has acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in 2008, and made significant and made significant efforts towards enhancing its legal framework, including by adopting the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons, the Law on Victim and Witness Protection, and the revised Criminal Code. While its legal environment has been significantly improved, weaknesses persist in victim identification and the prosecution of cases in the country. Law enforcement and judges have an uneven general understanding of trafficking in persons and its related legislation. Often due to misleading interpretations, trafficking offenders tend to be prosecuted under a lesser offence. In the past six years, 54 human trafficking cases were investigated and only 15 individuals were convicted of human trafficking.

Four months ago, the National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons was renewed by the Government. Guided by the 3 Ps approach of prevention, protection and prosecution, the programme aims to strengthen law enforcement to detect, prosecute perpetrators and protect victims. It is worth noting that the Network of Anti-Trafficking Non-Governmental Organizations in Mongolia, an umbrella organization founded by 19 local non-governmental organizations, actively participated in the development of the programme.

We believe that the current progress achieved and the concerted efforts accelerated by Member States and international organizations as part of the Global Plan of Action present promising opportunities to advance a holistic approach to combat trafficking in persons globally. Moving forward, we should fully take advantage of innovation and advancement in information and communications technologies for a more effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action. We also stress the need to intensify international cooperation, including capacity-building and technical assistance, especially for developing countries, to combat trafficking in persons.

In conclusion, I am pleased to note that Mongolia is honoured to be serving the second year of its membership in the Human Rights Council. As part of our endeavour to protect human rights and dignity worldwide, we reaffirm our firm commitment to combat trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Cyprus.

Mr. Korneliou (Cyprus): We highly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important meeting. In addition to the statement of the European Union, I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Seven years ago, the international community, united by the universal condemnation of trafficking in persons, joined efforts to implement globally an action plan to combat this heinous crime. Member States, under the guidance of the United Nations, have developed comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies and engaged in cross-border cooperation in investigations and prosecutions. They have taken measures for the restoration of the human rights of victims and set in place strategic partnerships with civil society, thus joining efforts for raising awareness and consciousness.

This high-level meeting reflects the strong commitment of the international community to the fight against human trafficking. We are here today because we share the fundamental belief that trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights and a shameful crime against human dignity. No doubt, the most recent inclusion of targets on trafficking in persons in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is very important. In parallel, the efforts of the Council of Europe, the European Union and other regional and international organizations that have joined this fight are also crucial. Unfortunately, and despite our continuous efforts, statistics reiterate the extent of the problem, showing that today more than 20 million persons are victims of human trafficking, almost 6 million of whom are children.

The often unavoidable link between conflict and migration means that people escaping from war and persecution may become victims of trafficking. In that regard, the effective implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, under the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees, creates a more solid and comprehensive framework to combat human trafficking. Prevention of trafficking in persons, protection and assistance to victims, prosecution of perpetrators and strengthening of partnerships are also priorities of Cyprus. Our contribution to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, underlines this commitment. All people are born free and equal. Our responsibility is to make sure that no person or child is deprived of the right to a dignified life.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Bulgaria.

Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/72/PV.24).

The Government of Bulgaria is strongly committed to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, prosecuting the traffickers and protecting and assisting the victims. Bulgaria emphasizes the importance of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and welcomes this high-level meeting and the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), which renews the global commitment to eliminating this heinous crime and ensuring protection of the victims, also in line with the responsibilities ensuing from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind.

Trafficking in persons is a grave human rights violation and a highly lucrative form of transnational organized crime with huge human, social and economic implications that requires a concerted global response. Bulgaria emphasizes the importance of accelerating international cooperation to eliminate human trafficking through a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and cross-border approach. Better cooperation should be established among countries of origin, transit and destination on information-sharing and victims' identification, support and reintegration, including in the consolidation of transnational referral mechanisms and data-collection systems. Bulgaria reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention, which constitute a solid foundation of international law in this area, as well as Security Council resolution 2331 (2016).

Bulgaria was among the pioneers in Europe in adopting specialized anti-trafficking legislation back in 2003, and currently it has one of the most comprehensive institutional frameworks to combat trafficking in persons. Bulgaria has penalized trafficking in persons and introduced more severe punishment for crimes involving children.

Bulgaria's new national anti-trafficking strategy for 2017-2021 contains the Government's long-term vision to combat trafficking in persons. It places special emphasis on early detection and prevention and

follows a victim-centred, human rights-based, gender-specific and child-focused approach, thereby enabling a series of consultations with all stakeholders and an analysis of ongoing trends. Special measures are taken to raise public awareness, especially among children, in partnership with local authorities, civil society and youth volunteers. The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings coordinates the State policy in this priority area and provides assistance for victims of trafficking in Government-funded shelters, including specialized facilities for child victims.

In recent years, Bulgaria has increased its capacity to ensure the rights of trafficking victims and has stepped up its participation in international efforts to fight this crime. Combating trafficking in persons will be one of the priorities during the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first semester of 2018.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the President, his team and all those in charge of drawing up the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We welcome the adoption of the Plan and all the tireless efforts deployed to that end.

We reaffirm the commitment and readiness of Saudi Arabia to help any efforts to end the crime of human trafficking and to work in cooperation with the international community, beginning with the adoption of national codes and legislation that are consistent both with the vision of the United Nations for sustainable development and with the Kingdom's 2030 Vision, taking due account of the United Nations Global Plan of Action.

My country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, attaches great importance to the rights of citizens and foreign residents in Saudi Arabia, whom we provide with all the necessary care, consistent with sharia — Islamic law — which honours the values and dignity of human beings and rejects anything that undermines them. That is why Saudi Arabia is among the first rank of countries in the fight against human trafficking.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always been among the first countries to ratify United Nations protocols to combat trafficking of human beings in all its forms, in particular crimes that affect women, children and persons with disabilities. We have ratified 16 international conventions, including the Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour. We have also played an active role in international efforts to combat the crime of human trafficking. Last week, we participated in the high-level meeting called by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, which issued a declaration and a call for action to eliminate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. We supported the declaration and the call to action alongside other countries. All of this confirms the international resolve to combat and eradicate these heinous crimes.

At the national level, in 2009, my Government enacted a code to combat human trafficking. An anti-human-trafficking committee was also established within the framework of the human rights body that coordinates national efforts to combat and eradicate those crimes in all their forms, and helps to raise awareness among the public. In addition, contact centres have been established to offer their services to foreign workers working in Saudi Arabia. These centres receive complaints and resolve disputes as quickly as possible in an effort to safeguard the rights of employers and employees alike. The code also stipulates deterrent penalties against anyone found guilty of human trafficking, including prison sentences of up to 15 years and significant fines. In some cases, the punishments stipulated by the code are more severe when crimes target women, children or persons with disabilities.

My delegation wishes to share with the international community a source of very grave concern — the increase in crimes carried out by armed groups connected with human trafficking in conflict zones, targeting women and children in particular. Such crimes take advantage of the needs of the victims and the absence of proper structures, and represent a challenge to the international community. We must cooperate at the international and national levels. With this in mind, we call for greater information-sharing on those who finance and encourage those crimes.

In conclusion, my delegation reaffirms our cooperation with the United Nations and the international community, in particular on the protection of human beings from human trafficking. Penalties that dissuade those who might commit these crimes should be encouraged. The negative psychological effects on victims must also be taken into account.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Mero (United Republic of Tanzania): I thank the President for the opportunity to make a statement on this agenda item. Indeed, this high-level meeting is timely, as the world is embarking on a global effort to combat trafficking in persons.

It is an undeniable truth that, at some point, each country is affected by acts of human trafficking. Women and children are among most vulnerable groups affected by this illegal phenomenon. Tanzania, like all other countries around the world, sees this as slavery in a disguised form. As we convene to appraise the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, I stand here today to testify, on behalf of my Government, to the progress made in the implementation of legal instruments set forth to combat trafficking in persons.

Tanzania has taken various initiatives to complement the efforts of the international community in combating trafficking in persons, including the ratification of the relevant international legal instruments. The Government enacted the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act No.6 in 2008, which prohibits all forms of trafficking and prescribes punishments for perpetrators of human trafficking. The Act also established the National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Secretariat, with an annual budget allocated by the Government to facilitate their activities.

The Government has also developed a directory of service providers for victims of human trafficking and a manual for civil-society organizations in handling incidences of trafficking in persons. In addition, the Government has established guidelines for safe family reunification for victims of trafficking and drawn up a training manual for law-enforcement officials on matters related to trafficking in persons. In recognition of the importance of data to inform Government action, Tanzania's collaboration with development partners has established a national database on trafficking in persons as a means to inform policies and allocate funds.

Apart from the preparation of a national action plan to combat trafficking, Tanzania is also implementing the standard operating procedures for the identification of and assistance to victims of trafficking in persons and for protecting, assisting and referring trafficked children. Moreover, Tanzania makes significant efforts to raise public awareness as a key to increasing the public's knowledge and understanding of the issues that affect the groups most vulnerable to human trafficking.

On behalf of the Government of Tanzania, I wish to acknowledge and appreciate the support that Tanzania has been receiving from development partners in the fight against human trafficking. My country stands ready to enhance partnerships to combat trafficking in persons as part of our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which envisions leaving no one behind, including with respect to this particular scourge.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Uruguay.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President for convening this high-level meeting and yesterday's speakers for their briefings.

While the concept of slavery as it was known centuries ago has been abolished, we still face what is known as modern slavery. Trafficking in persons, the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, forced labour, forced marriage and debt bondage are some aspects of that scourge, affecting millions of people around the world. For Uruguay, its eradication is an extremely urgent goal and a priority within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7.

Uruguay emphatically condemns trafficking in persons and related crimes that seek to exploit individuals and take advantage of their status or vulnerable situation, which implies disregarding their human nature and human rights. We must focus on the objectives of combating those crimes and guaranteeing the fundamental rights of victims by consolidating prevention and protection measures and mechanisms. Uruguay considers it essential to give priority to the rights of victims of trafficking, who must be at the centre of all efforts to prevent and combat that crime in order to protect them, provide them with assistance and reparation, and ensure that their dignity is restored.

It is also essential to guarantee recognition of the universality of human rights, based on the fact that the right to equality and non-discrimination is independent of gender, age, sexual orientation or identity, social, economic or political status, ethnic or racial origin, or other characteristics of the individual and his or her family or community. It should be borne in mind that

no conduct justifies a victim's submission to conditions of exploitation, whether lawful or unlawful, regular or irregular, morally accepted or not by the community in which the act occurred — not even if it was consensual.

Uruguay has made international commitments in joining the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime — also known as the Palermo Protocol, which was adopted in 2003. At the national level, Uruguay has been acting in a focused manner, particularly since 2008, with the creation of an inter-institutional round table to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, made up of various governmental bodies and with the participation of organized civil society.

In recent years, the round table has focused its efforts on drafting a comprehensive bill to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, which will soon be brought before Parliament for consideration and approval. In parallel to that process, work is under way to establish a plan to prevent and combat trafficking and exploitation of persons, which will be in force from January 2018. It aims to identify specific and integrated actions in relation to that violation of human rights.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that the only way those practices can be prevented, denounced and ultimately eradicated is through the cooperation of all society at the local and national levels. In view of the international dimension of that crime, cooperation among States is also essential to combat trafficking in persons, and to prosecute and condemn those responsible.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we wish to express our country's support for the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking (see A/72/PV.24).

Trafficking in persons is a despicable crime that infringes upon human dignity and constitutes a serious violation of human rights and all legal regulations on that issue. We are concerned about the international increase in that crime, the majority of whose victims are women and children. The various causes of and motivations for such crimes have been exacerbated in recent years by poverty, social exclusion, lack of access to education, high rates of youth unemployment, increasingly restrictive and exclusive immigration policies, inadequate channels for regular migration, and armed conflicts in various regions of the planet.

For Venezuela, prevention is the cornerstone of the fight against trafficking in persons. Therefore, the comprehensive approach to tackling this scourge requires strengthening social policies and the fight against poverty and exclusion in order to prevent vulnerable groups — especially women and children, as well as refugees and migrants — from falling into networks of organized transnational crime

The international community is endowed with strong legal instruments, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol, that need to be effectively implemented. We also have the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is an important point of reference and progress that sets out international commitments to eliminate this scourge.

In that context, the revision of the Plan that is being implemented this year obliges us to reiterate and strengthen the resolve of all States to fully comply with the indisputable obligation to combat this heinous crime by bolstering its preventive mechanisms, accountability, data and evidence collection, and, above all, a frank and inclusive international dialogue. It is also necessary to recognize the important role played by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, as well as other entities of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, within the framework of their mandates.

Venezuela stresses that efforts aimed at the effective prevention and eradication of that crime require the non-securitization of the issue and ensuring broad and democratic discussion spaces that ensure the full participation of all Member States of the United Nations. In that regard, Venezuela reiterates its categorical rejection of unilateral reports based on subjective and political perceptions, which weaken multilateralism rather than contributing to its strengthening, and politicize the issue, undermining national and international efforts to fight that crime.

Among the causes and motivations that have exacerbated the rates of this crime in recent years are conflict situations and military invasions, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. Military occupation aimed at dismantling the institutions of the country where intervention has taken place leaves the entire population, as well as migrants, refugees and displaced persons at the mercy of criminal gangs who use their tragedy and helplessness to abuse them, turning them into a commodity to be traded, often for the benefit of interest groups or countries that exploit them at will.

The crime of trafficking in persons is not prevalent in Venezuela, and our financial system does not benefit from the profits therefrom. The Venezuelan legal framework related to this matter is contained, in the first instance, in our Constitution, as well as in the different organic laws that ratify the international protocols in the matter.

In conclusion, Venezuela reiterates its commitment to respect and to the promotion and protection of human rights. We also reaffirm our commitment and willingness to continue to fulfil our obligations under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and other international legal instruments related to the subject.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Switzerland.

Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): This meeting is an excellent opportunity to reaffirm our political commitment in the fight against trafficking in human beings. The current large migratory flows confront us with new challenges. They require us to re-evaluate the gaps in prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, namely, the four pillars designated by the United Nations Global Plan of Action. Allow me to raise the following three points.

First, humanitarian crises and armed conflict are particular challenges in the fight against trafficking. Humanitarian actors are increasingly confronted with this phenomenon and have a role to play in prevention and protection. It is important that humanitarian actors, alongside their development partners, strengthen their commitment and coordination in this regard.

Secondly, it must be clearly recognized that forced displacement and migration create particular vulnerabilities and opportunities for trafficking and exploitation, including exploitation through labour. Loss of livelihood, lack of legal access to the labour market and high sums paid to traffickers are but a few of the causes that encourage exploitation through labour. In November 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland participated — with several United Nations agencies and international actors — in a conference on combating trafficking in persons for forced labour along migration routes. On that occasion, the role of the private sector was brought up. Switzerland supports the important work of Ms. Giammarinaro, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, who launched an initiative to strengthen multiparty actions and strategies of the industry coalition.

Thirdly, on 18 October, on the occasion of the European Day for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Switzerland will launch the third week of action against trafficking in human beings. Awareness-raising activities will be organized throughout the country. An excellent example of partnership, the campaign is inspired and coordinated by a group of State actors and civil society.

Finally, I would like to conclude by stressing once again the importance of the ongoing negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The latter represents an opportunity to integrate principles and strategies to combat trafficking in human beings in the international dialogue on migration. Discussions at the start of the month in Vienna at the fifth thematic session on smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, including appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims, have already prepared the ground for this.

The role of civil society in identifying and protecting victims of trafficking remains key. We cannot fulfil our mission without it. Thus, Switzerland will contribute up to 80,000 Swiss francs to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Hungary.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and its member States (see A/72/PV.24) and welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan

of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

Human trafficking is one of the most horrific crimes of our times. It is an open wound on the body of humankind. Sadly, it occurs in every country, every region, all around the world and is therefore a truly outstanding global challenge. Transnational criminal networks take advantage of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of societies. They deprive their victims not only of freedom but also of human dignity.

I am convinced that we cannot win this fight alone. There must be effective cooperation and partnership between the countries of origin, destination and transit, as well as among States, international organizations, civil society and business groups, including through the mechanism of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. Hungary believes in dialogue, in collaboration and coordination between all relevant stakeholders. We have just hosted a panel discussion related to human trafficking on protecting religious minorities and another one, the United Nations Conference of the Global Sustainability Network, which has a growing membership of more than 300 socially conscious philanthropists, businesswomen and men, very influential change-makers, movers and shakers. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade hosted regional consultations for the Workshop of Alliance 8.7 for Europe and Central Asia jointly organized by the International Labour Organization.

We also believe that raising awareness is crucial both at the national and global levels. In that respect, the media, the advocacy groups and civil society are important partners. This is the reason, for example, why I hosted the Foreign Press Association Scholarship Fund Awards in May, addressing the topic of human trafficking and the role of the international media in shining a light on the great moral and societal issues of our times. With the same aim of putting modern slavery in the spotlight, Hungary works together with different media companies, filmmakers and journalists.

Besides empowering all stakeholders so that they become conscious consumers, vigilant law-enforcement officers, trained humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel, dedicated policymakers and safe Internet users, we need to empower the survivors. Today I am asking how we can implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons more effectively. First, our actions need to be tailored to the specific case at hand. Our response has to be gender- and age-sensitive as well as exploitation-type-specific. Secondly, persecution and prevention should go hand in hand. Thirdly, collecting and analysing data is of key importance. Fourthly, investigations into human trafficking should always include parallel and complementary financial investigations of human-trafficking networks. And, fifthly, ensuring accountability is essential. States should step up their efforts aimed at finding perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

Our commitment is to keep these issues on the agenda as a priority, and I encourage Member States to engage in strengthened cooperation in law enforcement, investigations and information-sharing. We need a planetary consciousness in this regard. We need to share our information, data and knowledge and start coordinating our actions. Let us work together.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Ireland.

Ms. Nason (Ireland): I am here today because my country, Ireland, stands full-square with all who want to bring an end to the scourge of the trafficking of people. We applaud the convening of this meeting to shine a light on the tens of millions of victims worldwide. We also join in solidarity and, importantly, with resolve, to end the horrors of exploitation and abuse endured by those victims.

Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/72/PV.24). The European Union and its member States play a leading role globally in working to prevent and combat human trafficking. Ireland also salutes the statement delivered by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Human Security Network (see A/72/PV.24).

Just under one year ago, Ireland adopted a robust national action plan to prevent and combat human trafficking. We worked in consultation with national and international partners, including civil society, to set out a state-of-the-art, clear, collaborative programme to advance the fight against trafficking and also, importantly, to enhance the protection of victims.

Our response to human trafficking benefits from the rigorous domestic scrutiny and international evaluation in which we engage — and I underline — on a regular basis. We have created a dedicated State structure and

enacted and updated major parts of our legislation to implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. But through all of that work, we remain singularly focused on the paramount need to place all victims, but particularly women and girls, who are the majority of victims of trafficking, right at the heart of our response. We have taken a number of very concrete operational steps to achieve that end, and today I will briefly highlight just four of those.

Mrs. Pobee (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

First, a dedicated anti-human-trafficking unit has been established within our Department of Justice and Equality. That unit is responsible for an across-Government coordination policy and response, bringing together those State and non-State actors I mentioned earlier in partnership.

Secondly, we have in place a centralized human-trafficking investigation and coordination unit within our national police service. The unit has top-level expertise on sex crimes, child protection, Internet exploitation, organized prostitution and associated crimes. It engages actively in international police work aimed at tackling those gangs that engage in trafficking across borders.

Thirdly, we have established a dedicated anti-human-trafficking team within our health service that responds to individual victims with dedicated care plans for them.

Fourthly, we have a responsive national referral mechanism that works for suspected victims of trafficking and looks to their immediate needs and ensures they can avail themselves of ongoing supports to aid in their recovery. Ireland's criminal justice system today also includes prosecution and prevention measures based on our legislation that combats the crime of trafficking but also reduces or aims to reduce the demand for trafficking.

Another important aspect that we believe leads to effective implementation is that we are working on a true partnership basis in which State and non-State agencies come together in a way that allows us to ensure that suspected victims are identified at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, on an ongoing basis, we are improving training for those agencies and non-governmental actors to raise public awareness of the dimensions of this disaster. The anti-trafficking work that we do in our non-governmental sector is supported not just in kind, but also funded by the State in many cases. We see the work in Governmental and non-governmental contexts as absolutely fundamental and complementary. In sum, my country, Ireland, is doing everything in its power to address this horrific scourge.

I want to finish by thanking the President of the General Assembly for organizing this valuable meeting. In particular, I want to echo the Secretary-General in his own powerful concluding remarks yesterday:

> "As long as this crime exists we cannot tell young people that the future will be better than the past. We cannot deliver on a world of hope and opportunity for all, and we dare not look at ourselves without a sense of abiding shame. Now is the time to stand together and stamp out this abominable practice." (*A/72/PV.24, p.3*)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Georgia.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is among the most flagrant violations of human rights of our time. The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons serves as a major framework for promoting a comprehensive, coordinated and consistent response at the national, regional and international levels to counter human trafficking.

As a State signatory to the anti-trafficking protocol, Georgia reiterates its commitment to spare no effort to prevent trafficking, punish the perpetrators and protect the victims. Our policy is focused on the so-called four "Ps": prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. To that end, Georgia has put in place a responsive legislative framework. For example, since 2003, human trafficking has been explicitly criminalized under our criminal code. In 2006, we adopted the law on combating trafficking in human beings, aimed at prevention, protection and prosecution of trafficking offenders. In 2012, that law was amended to provide social and legal protection, assistance and rehabilitation for child victims, in accordance with the recommendation code were refined to streamline the investigation process.

We are aware that combating trafficking in human beings requires concerted inter-agency effort. Therefore, in 2006, we created an inter-agency council

to act as a major shaper of policy in combating human trafficking. The council brings together representatives from all concerned line ministries and agencies, including the Chief Prosecutor's Office and Public Defender's Office, as well as non-governmental and international organizations.

Our national action plan for the period 2017-2018 focuses in particular on proactive methods for identifying victims. To that end, human-trafficking-inspection mobile groups and a related task force were set up, composed of representatives of law-enforcement agencies that regularly operate in high-risk areas. In addition, we have retrained investigators to develop their skills and raise their awareness with regard to human trafficking. As a result, the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions has been increasing annually.

Within the institutional arrangements for protecting and assisting victims of trafficking in persons, the State fund for the protection of and assistance to trafficking victims continues to provide shelters and a crisis centre, legal aid, psychological and medical assistance, and victim rehabilitation and reintegration. We also pay particular attention to the protection of vulnerable groups in the population. Children in street situations are at the centre of our attention. A number of legislative and institutional measures have been taken to provide those children with identification documents, register them for State-run services and promote a prompt response should any violence be committed against them. I would also like to take this opportunity to emphasize that increased international efforts are needed to protect the most vulnerable groups of the population, including internally displaced persons and refugees, from trafficking.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my country's commitment to further contributing to our joint efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan welcomes the official adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

We associate ourselves with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking (see A/72/PV.24).

We highly value the active role played by, and the contribution of, the United Nations, in particular the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and its coordinator, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in providing specialized assistance to Member States at their request. The 2016 UNODC *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* confirms that this scourge is essentially an international phenomenon and that cross-border trafficking in persons is by and large the consequence of general migration flows. According to the 156 Member States that responded, of most of the victims identified worldwide, approximately 60 per cent were foreigners or migrants.

As a member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, Kazakhstan supports all international efforts aimed at counteracting this form of modern slavery and calls on all States to fully and effectively implement the Global Plan of Action. Kazakhstan is proud to be one of the contributors to the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially for women and children, and calls upon other States for financial support to fight against trafficking in human beings. In December 2012, in his address to the nation on the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, President Nursultan Nazarbayev said, "The State should especially severely punish blatant cases of sexual slavery and attitudes towards women as a commodity."

Recognizing the need to increase the State's response to human trafficking so as to protect the vulnerable and bring perpetrators to justice, the Government of Kazakhstan has developed numerous action plans to combat human trafficking. We are currently implementing the 2015-2017 action plan, which envisages the coherent functioning of all the relevant national agencies and non-governmental organizations, in line with the political will to end impunity for traffickers. To that end, a national inter-agency coordination body has been created. I would like to mention just few measures that Kazakhstan has undertaken to help victims of trafficking.

We have established a national referral mechanism and introduced social standards to assist victims, and we are regulating the identification procedure for victims of human trafficking. Furthermore, our

preventive campaign "Stop Traffic" was carried out in a systematic manner. Our Government regularly keeps track of the activities carried out by modelling, tourist and marriage agencies that offer foreign travel and employment services, and monitors mass media and the Internet with a view to detecting materials related to trafficking in persons and child pornography.

It is important to note that our fight against this heinous crime is centred on human rights. We are party to and implement more than 60 multilateral treaties on human rights, including 13 directly related to counteracting contemporary forms of slavery, and we are ensuring an integrated approach to combating crime. We are implementing a State programme designed to further modernize the law-enforcement system, whose main task is to create by 2020 a system that meets high international standards.

Aware that no single actor can successfully fight human trafficking alone, Kazakhstan is actively cooperating not only with United Nations entities, but also with other international, regional organizations and civil society. Upon Kazakhstan's initiative, the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is planning to conduct a regional multi-stakeholder simulation training exercise on the identification of trafficking in human beings at the Central Asian regional hub for countering global threats next year. We express our deep appreciation for the work being done by the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator.

With financial and technical support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan, the Union of Crisis Centres has been running the national SOS hotline since 2010. The IOM also supported the publication of the first report on combating trafficking in human beings in Kazakhstan, which was prepared by the Commission on Human Rights, under the President of Kazakhstan.

We hope today's discussions of the United Nations Global Plan of Action will help to fulfil our intention to turn our words into decisive, concerted action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Alshamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their comprehensive reports. On behalf of my country, I welcome the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

The United Arab Emirates deals seriously with the issue of trafficking in persons, not only at the national level but throughout the world, based on our conviction that trafficking in persons constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights and a serious form of disregard for human, religious and cultural values. Because the United Arab Emirates hosts a significant number of temporary workers of many different nationalities each year, we have committed to working tirelessly to combat this crime and counter criminal gangs.

The United Arab Emirates launched its campaign to address this crime both nationally and internationally in 2006, when it started a comprehensive anti-trafficking campaign and enacted a federal law on combating trafficking in persons. This law was amended in 2015 to provide greater guarantees for victims of human trafficking, in line with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol.

In 2008, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking was established. It includes representatives from Government agencies and civil-society organizations and aims at coordinating efforts to combat human trafficking crimes, strengthening strategic plans at various levels and enabling the authorities to enforce laws and implement preventive and deterrent measures.

The United Arab Emirates has adopted a national strategy that comprises several aspects. In terms of prevention and prohibition, the United Arab Emirates has enacted laws and legislation to combat the trafficking of persons. These laws are regularly updated to keep them in line with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and relevant international legislation. As part of the efforts to prevent and enhance awareness of this crime, a diploma programme on anti-trafficking is being offered in the United Arab Emirates. The programme deals with the crime of human trafficking using a scientific approach.

In terms of prosecution and punishment, the United Arab Emirates is committed to pursuing and prosecuting the perpetrators of human trafficking. The

efforts of national law-enforcement agencies have led to the arrest of 106 traffickers to date.

As to protecting and supporting victims of human trafficking, the United Arab Emirates has provided protection for and guaranteed the legal and human rights of the victims of trafficking and exploitation through State-sponsored shelters and rehabilitation centres. The United Arab Emirates has also arranged for and facilitated continued residency in the country or return to their countries of origin of victims, according to their circumstances, while ensuring their safety and security.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance and effectiveness of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to address this global scourge and will continue to cooperate with the international community through the exchange of information and statistics so as to develop best practices and experiences in that regard. In addition, the United Arab Emirates is pleased to announce its pledge of $100,000 in financial support for the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in order to ensure that the fight against trafficking remains a common goal and shared objective for all the nations of the world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Honduras.

Ms. Cerrato (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): In 2010, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We reaffirm our commitment to systematically and forcefully condemning trafficking.

Trafficking in persons continues to be a serious problem for humankind. It requires a concerted international response as well as efforts by States to develop and implement effective measures for combating and eliminating trafficking in all of its forms and to strengthen existing measures to eliminate the demand for victims of trafficking. The Constitution of Honduras states that,

> "The human person is the supreme goal of society and the State. Everyone has the obligation to respect and protect it. The dignity of the human being is inviolable."

We acknowledge that all anti-trafficking measures and initiatives must not discriminate or fail to take gender equality into account, tailoring its approach to the needs of women and children.

As a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and in line with those obligations, Honduras has had legislation against trafficking in place since 2012. This legislation penalizes all forms of the crime, including the recruitment of young people for criminal activities.

It is important to highlight the fact that the United Nations has taken note of the decline of the homicide rate in Honduras. During his visit to the country in January 2015, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged the Government's measures to improve the security situation and noted that the homicide rate had significantly decreased since 2013 — from 86 homicides out of every 100,000 people to 66. Furthermore, the Government of the Republic created an inter-institutional commission against commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons that comprises Government institutions and civil-society organizations that play a key role in preventing and combating human trafficking. In addition, a plan of action has been developed and implemented and will remain in force until 2022.

In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, we committed to using all of the means at our disposal to strive to counter the abuses and exploitation that countless refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations are suffering. The journeys that are being undertaken every day increase the likelihood that these people will fall victim to criminal groups. Consequently, Honduras has implemented measures to improve the identification and protection of and assistance to victims of trafficking. One such measure is the strengthening of consular offices on the migratory route in Mexico and the United States of America.

We should not forget that the purpose of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is to establish and promote global, regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation to prevent and combat transnational organized crime more effectively. Accordingly, we acknowledge that if countries act in a coordinated manner, criminal networks will ultimately be undone.

The Acting President: I now give the floor the Chair of the delegation of Viet Nam.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important high-level meeting.

Viet Nam welcomes the adoption of resolution 72/1, on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime that violates human rights and human dignity and poses a serious challenge to peace, security and development. Viet Nam strongly condemns and resolutely combats trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and related transnational crimes, by implementing various comprehensive policies and measures, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accordingly, I would like to highlight five of those policies and measures.

First, we have already ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Our Government has amended the national penal code to criminalize trafficking in persons in all its forms. We have established an inter-agency mechanism for coordination and are implementing a national four-year anti-trafficking action plan for 2016-2020, with a focus on preventing, investigating, prosecuting and punishing crimes of trafficking in persons and on assisting victims.

Secondly, to address the root causes of the problem, we have actively implemented numerous programmes on poverty reduction, education, employment, female empowerment and child protection. Using the media and the Internet, we have made great efforts to raise people's awareness, particularly among potential victims and in areas where human traffickers are active.

Thirdly, trafficked victims are placed at the centre of our policies and actions. We have established hotlines to receive information and created temporary shelters to protect and assist victims. Support is provided to victims to help them rebuild their lives through various rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, including food and medical services, vocational training and psychological counselling, and legal consultations.

Fourthly, we impose severe and punitive measures to combat the horrendous trafficking phenomenon. Perpetrators are prosecuted, convicted and sentenced, receiving punishment in the form of three to 20 years of imprisonment.

Fifthly, we attach great importance to regional approaches and mechanisms and actively promote the implementation of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We have also signed anti-trafficking memorandums of understanding with China and Cambodia with a view to cooperating in the identification of victims and the prosecution of traffickers.

Trafficking in persons affects almost all countries, be they countries of origin, transit or destination. We call on the global community to enhance cooperation to combat trafficking in persons, as no country can do it alone.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Viet Nam's commitment to working closely with the United Nations and other partners to turn our declaration into actions that end this heinous crime.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of El Salvador.

Mr. Jaime Calderón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to be able to address this high-level meeting to appraise the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

El Salvador welcomes the significant progress made at the regional and global levels in combating human trafficking. At the same time, it recognizes that we continue to face numerous challenges in terms of successfully combating this global scourge and attending effectively and expeditiously to its victims.

We reaffirm our commitment to ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any discrimination whatsoever, while placing special emphasis on the protection and restitution of the rights of victims of trafficking. In that regard, El Salvador, through its 2003 ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, undertook significant steps towards preventing, investigating and punishing the crime of human

trafficking, and towards focusing on restoring victims' rights.

In 2004, trafficking in persons was added to the penal code, and, in 2005 the national committee against trafficking in persons was established. The committee was operational until 2011, when it was replaced by the national council against trafficking in persons, to become the office responsible for the prevention of trafficking and the comprehensive care of victims. In 2012, the council adopted our national policy against trafficking in persons, which set guidelines for the institutions responsible for its implementation and ensured the formulation and implementation of a national plan.

In 2014, the special law against trafficking in persons was adopted. The law went into effect in January 2015 and established the modalities of action for the national policy against trafficking in persons, thereby reinforcing the ways in which the policy against trafficking, which had already been in force since 2012, could be implemented. This normative framework promotes concrete actions designed to identify possible cases of human trafficking through awareness-raising activities as well as to prevent such cases. The framework also comprises concrete measures focused on providing care for victims as well as protecting and restoring their rights — the ultimate goal in that regard being the unconditional respect for human rights that have been violated.

We have also run campaigns, such as the "The path of life is not always what you may imagine" and "Trafficking in women is a crime: let us raise our voice" campaigns, which were launched in cooperation with the regional coalition against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. Similarly, the Attorney General's Office is now endowed with a specialized prosecutorial unit for crimes involving illegal trafficking and trafficking in persons. The Office has also established an alert system called "Missing Angel", which helps to locate children and adolescents who have disappeared, possibly owing to trafficking in persons. The system provides the public with a toll-free telephone number for people to call and report cases of trafficking.

Trafficking in persons affects practically all countries of the world, whether they are a point of origin, transit or destination, It is therefore important that we coordinate efforts to combat this crime, bring about a more effective implementation of the Protocol at the national level, and show greater cooperation at both national and international levels.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Bahrain.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this extremely important high-level meeting.

My delegation welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1). For us, the declaration represents an important step forward in finding a collective response to this multidimensional phenomenon. We should also strive to achieve the rapid implementation of the goals set forth in the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, contained in resolution 64/293, as well as the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and their targets, in particular Goal 8 and target 8.7.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has ratified a number of declarations aimed at combating this phenomenon, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Furthermore, in 2007, we adopted a national law to combat trafficking in persons. This law defines what constitutes human trafficking and entails severe punishments for any individual or entity guilty of exploiting or trafficking workers. We have also established a national commission aimed at combating human trafficking, which is an effective mechanism for ensuring the physical and mental well-being of victims and providing them with the physical protection they need.

In 2015, we inaugurated a service and support centre for foreigners as well as a hotline in eight different languages for people to report cases of trafficking. We also published a guide that was translated into various languages and distributed to foreign workers upon their arrival in the Kingdom to inform them of their rights and the communications channels open to them. Furthermore, the national committee to combat trafficking in persons set up a national programme to bring together the relevant authorities to address cases of human trafficking. It is a unique system at the regional level which allows us to reinforce measures taken at the international level by defining the roles of the various parts of the mechanism that deals

with presumed or proven cases of human trafficking, including their prosecution. An executive office was also established, bringing together representatives of various Government and other public entities, and is aimed at ensuring cooperation with the private sector, as well as raising awareness. Given the scope of the phenomenon, we have organized a number of various activities, seminars, conferences and workshops on the subject so as to raise awareness.

We are well aware of the harmful effects of armed conflict in various regions throughout the world and their implications in terms of human trafficking in particular and of human rights in general. We therefore firmly believe in the peaceful resolution of conflicts so as to help us combat trafficking and allow victims to recover their rights and ensure their well-being. My country was one of the first to support the call for action to end forced labour, modern slavery and trafficking in persons. We remain committed to ending that phenomenon.

We reiterate the importance of cooperation among Member States, agencies and the relevant authorities, in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration and all other relevant United Nations agencies. Such cooperation will allow us to respond rapidly to the challenges we face. Cooperation in implementing the Global Plan of Action, including in collecting, analysing and sharing data, will enable States, non-governmental organizations and international agencies to share necessary information in a focused and timely manner, thereby enabling the relevant authorities to respond effectively to the phenomenon of human trafficking, raising awareness among the public in general, facilitating the prosecution of the perpetrators of such crimes, and supporting the process of identifying victims.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Foreign Secretary of Maldives.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): Let me express my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for convening this very crucial and timely meeting. This is an important opportunity to generate further political momentum for the rapid implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

It is also timely against a backdrop where millions of people are moving across the globe in the hope of escaping poverty and conflict but are increasingly and unwillingly falling into the hands of smugglers and traffickers. Trafficking in persons is an inhumane and criminal activity that tears families apart and fuels violence. It is a transnational organized crime that targets the most vulnerable.

Despite the inherently cruel nature of the crime, the increased number of trafficking cases is alarming. There are more than 500 trafficking flows in operation today, moving men, women, and children within and across borders. It is estimated that a disturbing 79 per cent of trafficking victims are women and children. When women and children are lured by promises of decent employment, they are sexually exploited and tortured if they try to escape. This is modern slavery, and slavery should not be allowed in our modern civilized world.

It is for that reason that we, as Member States, must do more. The Government of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom remains committed to the global fight to prevent trafficking in persons in line with the Global Plan of Action. Last year, the Maldives acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, in an effort to reinforce the implementation of existing instruments against trafficking in persons.

As required by the Anti-Trafficking Act of the Maldives enacted in 2013, an Oversight Committee has been established to steer policy effectively and implement legislation. In a further effort to address the issue comprehensively, the first National Action Plan to prevent trafficking in persons was formulated for the period 2015-2019. The Plan underscores the necessity of strengthening partnerships with the international community in order to combat that crime.

The Government of Maldives is at present conducting new baseline studies in collaboration with international partners so that we can better understand the problem. At the same time, we are strengthening our training programmes so that law-enforcement agencies are better equipped and can create the know-how to better identify victims. We have also established a mechanism to provide support and shelter for victims. As a result of those efforts, the Maldives has achieved recognition and recently gained more credibility under international benchmark-setting platforms.

Trafficking in persons must be addressed in a multidisciplinary and comprehensive manner. The

Government of Maldives is in complete agreement that the Global Action Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should go hand in hand, and we recognize that the specific targets of the 2030 Agenda will help to implement the Global Action Plan more rapidly and effectively. We are also of the view that the menace of human trafficking can be eradicated only if we, the Member States, join hands to strengthen our partnership coordination efforts.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland): Iceland is pleased to participate in today's meeting, as it gives us an opportunity to restate our firm commitment to the fight against human trafficking. It is a particularly cruel crime to prey on those who cannot defend themselves and to separate them from their loved ones for the purpose of benefiting from their vulnerability.

The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Person is a vital complement to the important legal standards of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in particular its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Together those documents create a framework for our joint action to combat trafficking through prevention, prosecution, protection and partnerships.

No country in the world is immune to trafficking in human beings, and that includes my own country, Iceland. That speaks to the importance of prevention as a key part of our efforts, responding to demands that cannot be neglected. We also need to train our police officers, airport staff and even flight attendants to recognize the signs of human trafficking in close cooperation with civil-society partners working on that issue. Combating human trafficking requires the awareness of society as a whole if we are to effectively address it.

It is also important to underline in this forum not only cooperation on this topic but also the important role that regional actors play in coordinating action. I would here like to highlight the important work that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is undertaking to address trafficking, both as a security threat and as a human rights issue.

Let us not forget the victims and survivors, who face multiple forms of discrimination owing to their status, hampering their ability to seek justice. In Iceland we recently opened a one-stop shop offering free comprehensive services for victims and survivors of abuse, including trafficking, bringing all actors together in support of those affected. We must seek innovative ways to assist those who have been subjected to that heinous crime and ensure that their human rights are protected.

Trafficking is a classic example of an issue that requires cooperation across borders. Let us work across all barriers to eradicate that terrible crime.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Tiare (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Burkina Faso welcomes this high-level meeting of the General Assembly and also welcomes yesterday's adoption by consensus of the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

In adopting the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons on 12 August 2010, the international community made promoting the universal ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime one of its objectives. That includes the additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, as well as the relevant international instruments related to human trafficking and the national, regional and international promotion of comprehensive, coherent and consistent action against that crime.

But where are we today, seven years after the adoption of this Global Plan of Action? That is an important question that needs to be asked, as the Plan must be regularly assessed, so that we can identify its achievements, shortcomings and prospects in order to better fight trafficking in persons.

Still today, human beings — particularly women and children — continue to be subjected to violence of all kinds throughout the world. That is the bitter truth. Burkina Faso, considered a transit and transfer country, has not been spared the phenomenon of human trafficking, and voted in 2008 — before the Global Plan of Action was even adopted in 2010 — to pass a law in favour of fighting trafficking in persons and similar practices.

We also committed, alongside other States affected by that issue, to an agreement at the regional and subregional levels in collaboration with international organizations with the aim of eradicating that form of modern slavery. In addition to legislative and regulatory measures, the Government is undertaking a wide range of awareness-raising activities to deter, unmask, apprehend and prosecute those who seek to profit from trafficking in their fellow human beings.

Such actions are being carried out by regional vigilance and surveillance committees throughout the 13 regions and provincial oversight committees in the 45 provinces. Those committees, composed of regional and provincial officials and community leaders, are responsible for coordinating, monitoring and evaluating regional programmes and plans relating to the fight against trafficking in persons.

Effective enforcement of human-trafficking legislation is a major challenge to our efforts to end trafficking in persons. That is why Burkina Faso remains convinced that no single country can win that fight alone — it requires a synergy of actions among States in addition to existing national legislative and regulatory measures.

In that context, Burkina Faso welcomes the adoption of the political declaration and reiterates its readiness to work continuously with other Member States for the successful implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Rutikanga (Rwanda): I thank the President for convening this important high-level meeting.

It is now seven years since the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/293, aptly entitled the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. It is therefore worth assembling today to reflect and, most important, appraise how far we have moved in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Trafficking in persons is a kind of transnational organized crime. As it is, to a large extent, transnational in nature, it necessitates national, regional and global strategies to combat, prevent and suppress it. Rwanda is a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its subsequent Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Building on those tools and guided by resolution 72/1, which includes the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which we adopted yesterday, we have the necessary framework and tools to effectively trace the human-trafficking lords. As the Secretary-General commented yesterday, we have not yet imprisoned the human-trafficking lords. Likewise, we have not seen human-trafficking proceeds freeze. We should be able to cut the flows of illicit money to those criminals. Unless we treat the beneficiaries of that abominable crime as high-profile criminals and develop legally binding instruments and effective mechanisms to track them, freeze and confiscate theirs assets and hold them accountable for their crimes, we will not put an end to that heinous crime.

Our experience shows that most of the victims are young people. They fall into the human-trafficking trap by being deceived and promised decent jobs in the countries of destination. Poverty, unemployment, marginalization and many other issues that fuel the problem have been mentioned. In that respect, we need to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goal commitments — to provide decent job opportunities, empower young people, enhance gender empowerment and create equal opportunities for all. That will effectively reduce people's vulnerability to trafficking.

In Rwanda, we are cooperating with other Member States in the region and beyond through special law-enforcement agencies, non-State organizations such as INTERPOL, and other United Nations organs on how we can collectively combat that vice. In August 2016, Rwanda law-enforcement agents, in partnership with INTERPOL, conducted an assimilated exercise session against transnational crimes such as terrorism, the narcotics trade and human trafficking, in which 13 countries from the region participated. The purpose of the exercise was to reach a harmonized level of understanding of the nature of human trafficking and forge a harmonized administrative procedure in combating human trafficking.

The Rwanda National Police and Rwanda Immigration closely cooperate with their counterpart institutions in the region. Rwanda law-enforcement agents closely collaborate with the Uganda police and Kenya police. As a result, between 2014 and 2016, 150 victims were prevented from being trafficked.

My country has initiated public-awareness campaigns and programmes, and all relevant organs are cooperating to design outreach programmes. We have also established a mechanism to protect victims, witnesses and whistle-blowers. The Government established the Isange one-stop centre as a rehabilitation centre for all victims of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, which helps the victims who have been affected by the scourge of human trafficking.

Finally, human trafficking is mostly transnational in nature. Along with the other bilateral arrangements that exist among Member States to combat human trafficking, we should not forget to make use of INTERPOL platforms and databases. INTERPOL tools, such as the I-24/7 system, certainly provide critical information securely and in a short period of time.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): Human trafficking pollutes our surroundings. Bangladesh welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We thank the Permanent Representatives of Belgium and Qatar for accommodating some of our concerns.

In today's conflict situations, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons remain at a heightened risk of trafficking and exploitation. Indeed, human trafficking during conflicts, including by terrorists, has emerged as one of the most serious human rights issues of our time.

In the last month, Bangladesh has witnessed an unprecedented influx of nearly 500,000 people — mostly Rohingyas from Myanmar's Rakhine state. We remain concerned by the possibility of the large number of women and children in that group falling prey to traffickers and people-smugglers who operate regionally. In order to avoid a repeat of the Andaman Sea crisis in 2015, we urge Myanmar to address the root causes of the dire situation in Rakhine state and all regional countries to remain vigilant against organized criminal networks and prevent them from taking advantage of the dark humanitarian situation prevailing in the area.

In view of our situation, as a country of origin, transit and destination, our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, maintains a zero-tolerance approach to trafficking in persons and people smuggling. Bangladesh has enacted the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act of 2012 and has adopted a national plan of action for 2015 to 2017 to implement a comprehensive law. We remain focused on further improving our prevention capacity through data collection, anti-trafficking information campaigns with the help of non-governmental organization partnerships and with the prosecution and early conclusion of trafficking cases.

At the regional level, we have spearheaded initiatives to broaden and institutionalize the scope of counter-trafficking operations under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. Bangladesh remains active within the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and, during the General Assembly high-level week, joined the United Kingdom's call to action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, pursuant to Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7.

Bangladesh also underscores the need for reducing cross-border trafficking flows as part of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. We joined the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 to that end. With regard to implementing the Global Plan of Action, we urge the Secretary-General to enhance the profile, relevance and visibility of the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons for Member States, including through the possibility of designating a high-level focal person.

The Security Council's political and humanitarian consideration of specific conflict situations should be informed by evidence on any emerging trend in trafficking in persons and related crimes. The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons needs to be supported in a sustained and predictable manner. Despite significant gains in the legal sphere, the rate of prosecution and conviction still remains relatively low around the world. We urge Member States to continue working on developing effective intelligence networks at the regional and international levels to monitor and intercept human trafficking and related crimes, including illicit financial flows.

In conclusion, Bangladesh reaffirms its commitment to work together with Member States to further strengthen the United Nations coordinated response and action against trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Trafficking in persons is a significant problem at the global level from which no country is immune. China strongly condemns trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and calls upon the international community to focus its efforts on the following areas:

First, it is essential to comprehensively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promote economic and social development, work to eradicate poverty, and uphold equity and justice in order to eliminate the breeding ground for the crime of human trafficking.

Secondly, it is essential to establish and improve working mechanisms that are led by Governments and ensure the participation of the whole of society with a view to preventing and combating human trafficking and providing relief and rehabilitation to the victims, with the goal of forming a well-functioning society-wide management setup.

Thirdly, it is essential to strengthen international cooperation in law enforcement, fully leverage the role of regional and subregional organizations, exchange intelligence and information in a timely manner, effectively conduct mutual assistance in criminal justice and severely punish perpetrators of human trafficking.

Fourthly, it is essential to effectively safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of victims and work harder to provide them with rescue and relief, protection, rehabilitation and settlement, with the focus on helping them get reintegrated into families and societies.

Attaching great importance to combating human trafficking, the Chinese Government has been working hard to implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In 2007 and 2013 respectively, the Chinese Government promulgated and started implementing the Plan of Action against Trafficking in Women and Children in China (2008-2012) and the Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons in China (2013-2020). In 2009, in a bid to refine the existing working mechanism featuring Government leadership and broad-based social participation, an Interministerial Joint Meeting System for Combating Human Trafficking, consisting of 33 departments, was established under the State Council of China, thus providing a solid systemic guarantee for preventing and combating trafficking in persons and assisting and protecting the victims.

Combating trafficking in persons is an urgent common task for the international community. China stands ready to work with other Member States and make concerted efforts to comprehensively implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (A/72/1), thus contributing to the harmony and shared progress of humankind.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Khaqani (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation thanks everyone who has contributed actively to the drawing up of the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

Member States managed to reach a consensus after long deliberations on the paragraphs of the declaration, which are of great concern given the sensitive nature of this subject for some countries affected by trafficking in persons. They are also of concern for other countries that face terrorism and believe that that subject has become one of the tools used by terrorist organizations to achieve inhuman objectives.

Iraq has expressed its position on the need to indicate clearly in one of the paragraphs of the declaration the increasing relationship between terrorists and human trafficking. We have indicated that the political declaration expresses the political will at the international level to combat intercontinental terrorism, which threatens secure societies. We have also stressed the importance of banning human trafficking and not allowing terrorist groups to take hostages from one country to another. It is therefore a common responsibility. We must work together to fight that phenomenon. Trafficking in persons and other violations and abuses are committed by terrorists to enslave people and to exact servitude and sexual exploitation. Those are the methods that we see at work in the region.

Iraq has suffered from such crimes, which are being committed by terrorist groups such as Da'esh. Those terrorist groups have kidnapped thousands of Iraqi citizens, in particular innocent women and children from among the Yazidis. They have been reduced to slaves and have been the subject of the worst forms of degrading and inhuman treatment. Given our responsibilities to bring the perpetrators of the worst crimes against the Iraqi people, my country, Iraq, to justice, working with its international partners, wrote a letter to the Secretary-General on 9 August 2017 asking for international assistance. The Security Council also adopted resolution 2379 (2017), which called for the gathering of evidence, for reinforcing capacity-building and for ensuring the prosecution of Da'esh fighters.

Iraq has therefore made a crucial contribution towards accountability and towards ensuring that criminals are tried and justice provided to victims. We call for Member States to implement the relevant resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 2195 (2014), in which the Council expressed its concern about exploitation by terrorist groups, organized crime groups and weapons traffickers.

We also call on all States to discharge their commitment to strengthen their efforts to identify trafficking operations and to stop them by any means necessary. We call for people to fight that phenomenon through constructive cooperation between all countries at the political, economic and security levels. We are dealing with a global phenomenon. No country can fight it effectively if the international community does not demonstrate its clear will to act together.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), following resolution 64/293, of 2010. It is a demonstration of the strong political will on the part of the international community to take action and put an end to such heinous crimes. Such phenomena pose a threat to human beings and are gravely concerning for the international community, since they constitute a violation of human dignity and fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, recent terrorist groups have practiced various forms of modern slavery on a major scale and in a systematic manner. The worst kind of trafficking in persons affects the rights of people of all ethnic groups and all religions. That is why the international community must combat such phenomena effectively through all means possible. Trafficking in persons heightens conflicts, especially those of a religious and ethnic nature. It also leads to violent reactions and a serious downward spiral of violence, against which the international community must fight.

The unprecedented waves of refugees throughout the world have led to a large number of victims of trafficking, according to the annual report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The increase was seen primarily in countries experiencing conflicts, such as Syria, Iraq and Somalia, but also in Europe, Asia and other countries in the Middle East. That is why we must reach political solutions in order to end all such conflicts and ensure that people are given back their dignity. Our duty as members of the international community is to address such phenomena from a global perspective and not to focus only on hotspots on the planet. We must also work at a regional level to counter such phenomena.

International and interregional groups such as the Human Security Network, of which Jordan is a member, play an essential role when it comes to awareness-raising and cooperation. What we are dealing with is not just a political issue; trafficking also affects development. In the framework of our efforts, we must take into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially when it comes to achieving SDG 16, aimed at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for all, where human beings are free from violence and fear.

Jordan believes that we can redouble our efforts to combat the smuggling of migrants, for which Da'esh is responsible in my particular region. We need national, regional and international efforts to fight terrorism and extremism. Young men and women, as well as women and children, need to become aware. We also need to provide technical assistance to the countries in need of such assistance in order to create a global preventive strategy. We can never sufficiently emphasize the linkage between trafficking, on the one hand, and terrorism and extremism, on the other. We must cooperate in the exchange of information and capacity-building with the assistance of international institutions, in particular UNODC, which plays an essential role in that area.

Particular importance is attached to rehabilitating victims who have been forced to rebuild their lives. In that regard, we must also give special attention to women and children. Trafficking is a crime under the Jordanian criminal court code. We ratified the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, adopted in Palermo, Italy, to put an end to contemporary slavery and trafficking in persons.

We are working to expose all forms of trafficking in persons by establishing a national commission with a view to bringing together representatives of the various ministries and competent authorities. We have also formed a unit against human trafficking, so that the legal system can implement the strategy established in 2010-2012, which makes it possible to bolster the capacity of judges and enables victims to recover their rights, especially victims of forced labour.

We have, furthermore, created a national commission against trafficking in persons with a hotline number, which makes it possible for victims to reach the authorities in the event of abuse. We have a national mechanism that makes it possible to bring all cases of trafficking to justice, as well as to provide shelters for victims. Additionally, we have a national strategy until 2025 that makes it possible to reinforce our actions towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, we have created a rehabilitation centre, which we have named the "House of Dignity". It is under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Services.

We are also coordinating the efforts of our national authorities, in cooperation with the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, to respond to the particular needs of Syrian refugees and their children with a view to providing them with all of the social and psychological support they need, with the assistance of UNICEF. We will continue our efforts to counter trafficking in persons, especially the crimes committed by terrorist organizations. We are willing to cooperate with all regional and international authorities in order to put a stop to such phenomena and to respond to their consequences, as well as to prevent them.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Almunaikh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to welcome the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), adopted by the General Assembly yesterday morning. My delegation would like to express its deep thanks and appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of our brother countries of Qatar and Belgium for their efforts as co-facilitators of the political declaration. Their efforts helped us reach a consensus on the text.

Trafficking in persons has become a growing concern for humankind at large in recent times. It is a form of modern slavery and a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Trafficking in persons is an international phenomenon. It knows no specific country. It crosses borders and reaches new countries. It takes various forms and displays various patterns. The perceptions of States with regard to the notion of trafficking in persons differ according to the level of respect for human rights, customs, traditions, culture, criminal legislation and the political regime of the country.

The State of Kuwait believes in identifying the root causes behind the increase in the phenomenon of trafficking in persons, which include a number of social, economic, cultural, political and other factors. Such factors make people vulnerable to trafficking, as they include poverty, unemployment, inequality, conflicts, disasters, sexual violence, gender discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization.

My delegation stresses that Kuwait is committed to promoting and protecting human rights and continuing the fight against trafficking in persons. Here I would like to highlight briefly the actions and procedures undertaken by Kuwait, including the enactment of legislation, that demonstrate our steadfast will to fight such crime and deter the ill-intended people who are involved in perpetuating crimes of trafficking in persons.

First, Law No. 109 of 2013 provides for the establishment of the National Labour Force Agency, which is tasked with drafting rules and regulations guaranteeing the rights of migrant workers. Secondly, we are setting up temporary shelters for workers in line with the international conventions ratified by Kuwait. That action aims at providing the protection and full care of workers, as well as at helping them return to their countries.

Thirdly, we are implementing the 2013 Act on combating trafficking in persons and the smuggling of workers. It is a new step for us to uphold the rights

of migrant workers, whether in the international or domestic sectors. The law includes severe punishment of up to 15 years of imprisonment for those who are proved to be involved in the commission of such crimes. The reason for those measures is to ensure that traffickers do not enjoy impunity.

Fourthly, regarding the 2015 regulation on fighting cybercrimes, clause 8 of that legislation makes criminally liable any person who creates a website or spreads information by using the Internet or any other means of information communication technology for the purpose of trafficking in persons or facilitating their exploitation.

My country's efforts are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8 and 12. Furthermore, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, visited Kuwait upon an invitation from the State in 2016 to assess the situation and our institutional and legislative framework. In her report of 14 September 2016, which she presented at the thirty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council, she stressed that Kuwait has proved its commitment to fighting trafficking in persons and that Kuwait was a model to be followed in the region and beyond. She further commended our institutional and legal framework in the area of labour, the private sector, domestic service and child labour.

Recently, my country joined the International Migration Organization (IMO) as an observer. My country believes in the role of the IMO in fighting all forms of trafficking in persons. Kuwait effectively cooperates with the IMO to fight that phenomenon by holding educational and awareness-raising seminars on the matter.

Concurrent with our meeting today, the Government of Kuwait is considering the adoption of a national strategy to fight trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, with representation from ministries and various other sectors. The strategy is based on three pillars, namely, prevention, protection and partnerships, in addition to cooperation at the local and regional levels. In conclusion, we must underscore that despite all international efforts to address the phenomenon, it remains a paramount challenge that requires increased concerted efforts from the international community.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the adoption of the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1), and we appreciate this opportunity to share some of what we are doing to combat human trafficking.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines established an anti-trafficking-in-persons unit in 2012. That unit carries out many activities, which include the sensitization of more than 30,000 students and over 3,000 teachers, in a population of 110,000 people; the sensitization of key stakeholders, such as churches, non-governmental organizations and law enforcement; media outreach; and the investigation of more than 10 potential cases of human trafficking, with one arrest made in 2015.

We have strengthened our legislative framework to combat human trafficking. We have ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (resolution 55/25). There is coordination across ministries and departments to ensure that we adhere to that and other international plans aimed at combating human trafficking. Our Parliament has recently revised the Immigration Restriction Act to criminalize the smuggling of migrants. That amendment will complement the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2011.

In February, using technical assistance received through the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States on the one hand, and the European Community and its member States, on the other hand, and the International Organization for Migration, we made further progress in the form of a revised national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons and formulated a data-gathering tool on trafficking in persons.

There is need for coordination internationally. Through bilateral cooperation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been a part of rescue operations for some of its own citizens who have been trafficked abroad. No country is immune to human trafficking, and we are doing our utmost to fight any sign of infection. We believe that one case of human trafficking on our

shores is one case too many, and we will continue to use all tools at our disposal to close all potential avenues for traffickers. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains deeply committed to the fight against trafficking in persons and expresses solidarity with the victims and survivors of such heinous crimes.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Ms. Bassols Delgado (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the political statement made yesterday on this topic by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting devoted to the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and for giving greater visibility to that international scourge. We are also grateful to the facilitators and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their work during the negotiations on the recent adoption of the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

In the interest of time, I will focus my statement on five very specific points. First, trafficking in persons constitutes one of the most fundamental attacks on human rights, affecting women, children and men. Trafficking also entails clandestine activity, about which there is limited information or knowledge. Furthermore, it is the result of very complex worldwide problems involving social, economic, health, political and legal factors. If we therefore want our appraisal exercises to have an effect, we will have to address the phenomenon of trafficking comprehensively.

Secondly, the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons must be revitalized so that we can make progress in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals related to combating trafficking, as well as in dealing with all of the aspects related to prevention, impunity and victims' needs. Cooperation among of all the relevant bodies is, therefore, crucial.

Thirdly, trafficking requires a specific response when it occurs in the context of conflict situations, because, in such cases, the national criminal justice system is affected. Security Council resolution 2331 (2016), which was sponsored by Spain, calls for the taking of measures by a number of United Nations bodies, Member States and other stakeholders that can help advance efforts to combat trafficking in persons in conflict-affected areas. That resolution highlighted the undoubtedly perverse relationship linking trafficking, sexual violence in conflict, organized crime and terrorist funding. In that vein, we welcome the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), because we believe that it will truly help efforts to hold those responsible for the crimes committed by Da'esh in Iraq accountable.

Fourthly, Spain believes that we must redouble our national efforts. The existing relevant conventions and protocols must be complemented with an exchange of views on our best practices and national policies. Last week in this very Hall, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain proposed establishing an international network of anti-trafficking coordinators (see A/72/PV.14).

Fifthly, I would like to highlight the fact that Spain is developing a firm and comprehensive policy to combat trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal and trafficking in human organs. Upon the initiative of Spain and Guatemala, the General Assembly recently adopted resolution 71/322, which is aimed at promoting organ donations and transplant systems that follow clinical, ethical and altruistic criteria. Spain has been very successful in that area, and we are ready and willing to share our experience with everyone.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I concluded without pledging to continue our firm commitment and efforts in the Human Rights Council aimed at combating trafficking in persons, should we be elected to that body on 16 October. We are also determined to work closely with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the other relevant bodies of the United Nations system that are engaged in combating — in our view — one of the major scourges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2, of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Valastro (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): It is my pleasure to take the floor on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies representing the world's 190 national societies and their 13 million community-based volunteers.

As a first principle, when it comes to confronting trafficking, we should set as our primary goal doing what we can to prevent trafficking from occurring, as well as protecting and supporting those at risk. Our organization welcomes the fact that the political declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1) reaffirms the commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development relating to combating all forms of trafficking in persons. We note, as well, that the political declaration refers to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which recognizes that refugees and migrants in large movements are at greater risk of being trafficked. It is our hope that the eventual adoption of a global compact on migration will provide the opportunity to find agreement on basic principles after decades of work.

Let me offer a few examples from within our network. The British and Australian Red Cross Societies operate programmes where people who have experienced trafficking are provided with accommodations, material support and a caseworker. The goal is to provide assistance addressing the unique vulnerabilities and risk factors of those who have been trafficked, and give them the time and support needed to decide the subsequent steps they would like to take. However, offering such services is worth little if the people whom we seek to help are too afraid to reach out to us. Supporting them means ensuring safe channels to access basic services and report abuse, irrespective of the legal status of such migrants. In particular, we call on States to ensure that vulnerable migrants have safe and confidential access to such support, without obliging them to choose specific service providers or disclose their legal status.

Secondly, we must keep our eyes wide open with regard to signs suggesting trafficking. Along any migratory trail, officials and organizations must actively be on the lookout for potential indicators of trafficking. States should also ensure that any person who has experienced trafficking or is at risk of exploitation is safely identified and referred to the appropriate sources of humanitarian support and assistance. It is only by working together, from cross-border collaboration to the provision of humanitarian support for those who have been trafficked and addressing the systemic drivers of trafficking and labour exploitation, that we can end trafficking. Most importantly, we must work with those who have experienced trafficking to understand those driving factors, how to protect the most vulnerable and how we can assist those who have experienced trafficking or exploitation so that they can rebuild their lives.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the delegation that wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mrs. Mozolina (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We will try to be brief. We would have preferred not to respond to the statement made by the representative of the Ukrainian delegation. Nevertheless, we believe that we need to respond to the attacks that were addressed to us in a statement.

We should bear in mind that, since the beginning of the 1990s, Ukraine has consistently performed poorly in terms of forced labour and human trafficking. According to data from the International Organization for Migration, Ukraine is one of the largest providers of slave labour in Europe. Since 1991, 160,000 Ukrainians have been victims of human trafficking. Of course, given the domestic armed conflict, for which the responsibility lies with the authorities in Kyiv, the situation has become particularly threatening.

I will now provide some other facts. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has repeatedly stated that Ukrainian displaced persons are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking. First and foremost that is because of economic difficulties caused by Kyiv's actions. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also provided information in his report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, including facts about women who were forced into prostitution with Ukrainian soldiers to ensure the survival of their families.

We encourage the Ukrainian authorities to consider once again that the introduction of a transport blockade in the south-east of the country and stopping social welfare benefit payments in that region has allowed crime-related business to flourish in the area, making those sections of the Ukrainian population the group

most vulnerable to human trafficking. Unfortunately, however, the Ukrainian delegation prefers to identify those outside of its borders, particularly in Russia, as the guilty party, rather than seeking genuine solutions to those very serious issues and participating in a substantive and constructive discussion in the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.27

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

27th plenary meeting
Monday, 2 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 107 (*continued*)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

The Acting President: Before we proceed, I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to three minutes when speaking in their national capacity, as stipulated in resolution 71/287. As members will recall, in its resolution 71/323, of 8 September 2017, the General Assembly called for strict adherence by each speaker to the time limits in the Assembly, particularly during high-level meetings. This will enable maximum participation within the limited time available for the meeting. Participants with longer statements are encouraged to read a shorter version of their text and to submit their full statements to the Secretariat for posting on the PaperSmart portal.

Also in accordance with resolution 71/323, the "all protocol observed" principle, whereby participants are encouraged, in the interest of saving time, to refrain from the listing of standard protocol expressions during their statements, is recommended. In the light of the given time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum. May I appeal to all speakers for their cooperation in observing the time limit of their statements, so that all those inscribed can be heard in a timely manner.

I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Ethiopia.

Ms. Hailu (Ethiopia): I would like to start by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting on an important issue. Ethiopia welcomes the Assembly's unanimous adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

Poverty, climate change, the level of development among States and societies, different standards of living, the income inequality that prevails in many countries, as well as conflict, are all factors that increase the vulnerability of people to human trafficking. For instance, migrants who cross international borders in search of a better life may become victims of human-trafficking and smuggling networks. Similarly, refugees who already find themselves in a vulnerable situation due to a lack of durable solutions, including those who engage in secondary movements, become prey to traffickers and smugglers.

Victims of trafficking continue to face unimaginable and often fatal dangers along their journeys, owing to the limited opportunities for legal migration and durable solutions. They continue to face various human rights violations, including violations of their labour rights

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and multiple forms of discrimination in transit and destination countries. All of these challenges require a comprehensive and holistic response that could be based on the three following pillars.

The first would address the root causes of trafficking in persons, such as poverty, unemployment and conflict. This approach requires States to take concrete steps to design and implement projects tailored to specific communities affected by trafficking in persons, contributing to their economic and social development and involving relevant development actors. As refugees are the group most vulnerable to trafficking in persons, this approach also requires us to find durable solutions to their particular situations. That could be achieved by enhancing support to countries hosting large numbers of refugees, based on the principles of international cooperation and responsibility sharing, and by strengthening the capacity of refugee camps to offer skills training and income-generating activities.

The second pillar would create interim frameworks for international protection, humanitarian assistance and efforts to address the needs of victims of trafficking. As such, the provision of lifesaving humanitarian assistance and basic necessities to victims of trafficking in countries of transit and destination is critical. In this context, maintaining the capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and strengthening international assistance to victims of trafficking remains central.

The third pillar would create safe, orderly and legal pathways by adopting a rights-based approach that ensures the protection of victims of trafficking in persons in transit and destination countries. This approach would require stronger cooperation among Member States, as underscored by the Secretary-General in his opening statement on Wednesday (see A/72/PV.24).

We can build on existing multilateral and bilateral frameworks, including within the context of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and on resolution 72/1, in order to foster enhanced cooperation in preventing and suppressing trafficking in persons, bring perpetrators to justice and provide support to victims. Building on existing frameworks to address trafficking in persons, including through the political declaration adopted on Wednesday, will also be necessary if we are to fill gaps in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration expected to be adopted next year.

In our view, these three pillars will enable the international community to respond to trafficking in persons in a comprehensive and holistic manner. I would therefore like to conclude by reaffirming our commitment to redoubling our efforts aimed at combating trafficking in persons based on these three pillars and within the context of resolution 72/1 and our obligations under various multilateral and bilateral frameworks.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan): I would first like to commend the President of the General Assembly for convening this important and timely high-level meeting.

In today's world, human trafficking is one of the most dangerous types of transnational organized crime. It continues to remain a serious challenge for the entire international community. In Uzbekistan, we are addressing this phenomenon at the State level. For example, in 2008, in order to take effective measures to prevent and combat human trafficking, we adopted a national law on countering human trafficking. Pursuant to this legislation, our President signed a decree on measures to improve the effectiveness of our efforts to combat human trafficking.

To assist in coordinating the activities of the departments involved in the fight against human trafficking, we created a national inter-agency commission on combating human trafficking, consisting of our Heads of State and Government, agencies and public organizations, ministries and departments, a women's committee, our national centre for human rights, a parliamentary commissioner for human rights or ombudsman, representatives of our youth union and a number of other non-governmental organizations. Our Prosecutor-General chairs the commission, since the Office of the Prosecutor-General has been assigned the task of coordinating the activities of relevant agencies in the fight against human trafficking.

In the framework of implementing Uzbekistan's law on countering human trafficking, the Cabinet adopted a decree in 2008 forming a national rehabilitation centre for assisting and protecting victims of human trafficking, which now plays an important role in

assisting victims of human trafficking in their return to normal life.

Illegal migration has recently become another acute global problem associated with human trafficking. From Uzbekistan's perspective, an effective way to prevent illegal migration for overseas employment is to increase citizens' awareness of potential difficulties in migration by explaining accountability for violations of the labour, tax, customs, passport and visa regulations of the countries where potential victims plan to reside. We have also launched a wide-ranging media campaign to increase public awareness not only of the dangers of human trafficking but also of the specific effects of crimes related to human trafficking and their negative consequences. In cases of the illegal exploitation of persons for labour purposes, for example, criminal proceedings are instituted against the individuals directly involved in this form of human trafficking. In addition, Uzbekistan is a signatory to major international conventions on combating illegal human trafficking, protecting its victims and punishing those who are involved in this criminal activity.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the Government of Uzbekistan has been consistent in its approach to combating human trafficking. We therefore remain committed to cooperating with the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Labour Organization and other international structures and parties through active participation in joint projects aimed at preventing human trafficking and protecting its victims.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Belize.

Ms. Young (Belize): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's deep appreciation to Ms. Grizelda Grootboom, whose strength and courage in standing before the world and sharing a story that she would no doubt rather banish from than burnish in her memory is unfathomable (see A/72/PV.24). But her story must be told, lest we forget that human beings no different from any of us in this Hall and no different from our own children are today being made to suffer the most intolerable indignity and inhumanity, something that should have been consigned to history when slavery was abolished more than a century and a half ago. Grizelda's story tells us of a human being's inherent vulnerability and society's blind eye. It tells us of how our failure to act all but perpetuates the impunity of traffickers and exploiters.

In Belize, we have a low incidence of cases of human trafficking but high incidences of human smuggling and commercial sex work, both of which promote vulnerability. For this reason, we have adopted legislation and a national plan of action to combat trafficking. Our national approach is multi-pronged and victim-centric, focusing first on prevention and capacity-building, on understanding the context in which trafficking occurs or might occur, and on how to prevent it through education and public awareness. Secondly, it focuses on how to protect victims and ensure their safety, and thirdly, on prosecution and how to ensure that justice is served. Fourthly, it focuses on partnerships and how to optimize our efforts through local, regional and international partnerships. Through increased cooperation, Belize hopes to complement these efforts with long-term assistance for victims, advanced training for investigators, the establishment of specialized investigative units and dedicated prosecutors and judges, and the implementation of a fast-track system for human-trafficking cases.

All of us here today are committed to combating trafficking, but we have not done enough. There are tens of millions of victims whose stories have yet to be told, which is a blight on humankind and an indictment of us all. I stand here to add my country's voice to those of all victims and survivors. Belize reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We fully support the adoption of the political declaration (resolution 72/1), which strengthens our resolve to vanquish this form of modern-day slavery once and for all.

To echo Grizelda's words, we cannot act on paper alone; human trafficking must be a real priority. We must match our resolve by delivering equally on the necessary resources and the widest cooperation at the national, regional and international levels. For Belize, combating trafficking is an absolute moral necessity, and we will make every effort to triumph over this heinous crime.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): My delegation commends and appreciates the initiative of the President of the

General Assembly in convening this high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We believe that the political declaration that we adopted late last week (resolution 72/1) should provide renewed momentum for translating the Global Plan of Action into reality without delay.

The heinous crime of human trafficking continues to taint our civilizations. No country — large or small, rich or poor, whether of origin, transit or destination — is immune to what has now grown to be a global menace. Poverty, discrimination, disasters, false dreams of success, empty promises made by unscrupulous operators, and forced migratory movements, among other things, are increasingly making it worse. Thousands of young boys and girls in our country, especially those from rural Nepal, seeking jobs in cities and foreign countries, are prone to trafficking. Heart-wrenching stories of young women and girls being trafficked abound, owing mainly to poverty, ignorance and temptation on their part, as well as inhuman greed on the part of traffickers.

Nepal has put in place strong legal and institutional measures at the national level to curb such crimes. Our efforts to address the root causes of human trafficking are focused on the principles of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, with due attention being paid to both the push and pull factors of human trafficking. The Constitution of Nepal of 2015 guarantees the right to be free from exploitation and bars human trafficking, forced and bonded labour. These serious crimes are punishable under the laws of Nepal. The Constitution also ensures legal remedies and compensation for the victims of slavery, bonded labour, trafficking and child labour.

Back in 2000, Nepal was the first country in South Asia to launch a national plan of action against trafficking in women and children. At the regional level, Nepal is a party to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children. At the global level, Nepal is a State party to 24 international human rights conventions, including seven of eight fundamental International Labour Organization conventions, most importantly those relating to protection of the victims of slavery and human trafficking.

I want to conclude by underscoring three specific points as part of our way forward in implementing the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

First, all Governments, international organizations, businesses and academic and philanthropic organizations should join hands to fight this multidimensional crime, focusing on its root causes. Nepal has a number of dedicated and credible institutions that can do much more if their capacity is strengthened further. The fact is that capacity-building at the local and national level is urgent and critical.

Secondly, the growing use of social media to tempt unsuspecting men, women and children into being trafficked should be dealt with head on. To do this and to curb tech-savvy traffickers, we should put in place additional security measures, including capacity-building and real-time information-sharing. Partnership that helps to build capacity is a must in that regard.

Thirdly, as was underlined by Nepal at the recent high-level meetings, the importance of investing in education and raising people's awareness should come into sharp focus through our concerted efforts in partnership with United Nations agencies and civil-society organizations. Increased engagement on the part of communities, local health workers, teachers and mothers' groups, among others, is an absolute necessity if we are to prevent these crimes, bring perpetrators to justice and ensure that the victims are compensated and reintegrated with dignity so that they can become fully productive members of society. All of these efforts will directly contribute to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals within the stipulated time frame.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I call on the observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Mr. De Rojas (Sovereign Order of Malta): I am delivering this statement on behalf of our Ambassador-at-Large for Monitoring and Combating Trafficking in Persons, Ambassador Michel Veuthey, who was here all of last week. He was supposed to speak on Thursday, but unfortunately had to return to our headquarters.

(*spoke in French*)

The Sovereign Order of Malta would like to thank the President for giving us the opportunity to speak at this high-level meeting on such a major issue. Since its founding 900 years ago, the mission of the Order of Malta, a sovereign entity in public international

law, has been to help vulnerable people. The Order of Malta now supports more than 2,000 medical, social and humanitarian projects in more than 120 countries, regardless of religion, ethnicity or nationality. We reaffirm the commitment of the Order of Malta to helping reduce the vulnerability of migrants and refugees and to protecting them, particularly victims of human trafficking.

The Order of Malta will strengthen its efforts by using its diplomatic network, both multilaterally and bilaterally, through its Ambassadors in 106 countries. In addition, we will increase the social services and humanitarian actions of our national associations and our global humanitarian organization, Malteser International.

The Order of Malta will continue to listen to other actors and learn from their best practices. We are open to cooperating with Governments and civil society to help better protect and rehabilitate the victims of contemporary slavery.

The President took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to ask the following three questions. First, how can we better use the values of solidarity and respect for human life to strengthen the legal instruments of national and international law — human rights, labour law, refugee law and the international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts, in order to end human trafficking? Secondly, how can we better highlight and share the contribution of faith-based organizations that protect and assist victims of trafficking in human beings nationally and internationally? Thirdly, how are we going to use next year's seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to highlight the plight of victims of human trafficking and the urgent need for States and civil society to assist and protect them, in accordance with the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons?

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/90 of 12 December 2001, I call on the observer of the International Development Law Organization.

Ms. Arenas Licea (International Development Law Organization): The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) welcomes this high-level meeting and the adoption of the political declaration (resolution 72/1).

As the only intergovernmental organization with an exclusive mandate to advance the rule of law and access to justice globally in the pursuit of sustainable development, our work is firmly focused on combating the underlying factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking, such as inequality, gender discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in Goal 16, provides us with a road map for building a world in which the conditions that often breed trafficking may be eradicated. Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime and antithetical to the rule of law. It is also a criminal act. Although trafficking is outlawed by several international treaties and conventions and despite the fact that Governments have made progress in passing relevant national legislation, much remains to be done to strengthen existing legal frameworks so as to ensure that the tools exist to pursue criminal charges. As part of our contribution towards preventing trafficking, the IDLO has provided technical assistance in the review and improvement of national legislation in line with international standards, created national anti-trafficking strategies and supported their implementation.

A strong, independent judiciary, together with properly trained police, prosecutors and border officials, backed by laws and regulations in line with international obligations, means that well-established institutions will be able to bring those guilty of trafficking to justice. Developing the capacity of legal and justice systems is critical for us to be able to effectively tackle trafficking in persons. However, institutions are not enough. People must be made aware of their rights in order to be able to claim them. That is why, alongside its capacity-development programmes, the IDLO also promotes legal-empowerment strategies and seeks to ensure that women, poor people, migrants and other marginalized groups can gain access to legal services, including legal aid. These are key ingredients for both prevention and protection.

Human trafficking continues to exploit millions of victims, the majority of whom are women and girls. We need to take a gender-centred approach when making interventions to tackle trafficking. Any discussion on women and girl survivors of trafficking must take into account the inequality and vulnerability that are often at the root of the problem. We cannot effectively protect women and girls from trafficking if we are not ready to combat gender discrimination globally and if we are

not willing to work to shatter the power structures that perpetuate this global challenge. Ultimately, trafficking is a business that deals in human suffering.

Trafficking is a cross-border, global problem that requires global action. Let us all unite to work together to end it.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/1 of 15 October 1996, I call on the observer of the International Criminal Police Organization.

Ms. Neugebauer (International Criminal Police Organization): I am happy to represent the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) at today's high-level meeting on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. INTERPOL is pleased to have been acknowledged in the political declaration (resolution 72/1) as an important contributor to combating this global phenomenon.

As the Assembly is aware, trafficking in persons is a crime that affects all regions and all countries in the world. It has many different faces. Member States can be affected as countries of origin, transit or destination. Although trafficking in persons takes such varied forms, international law-enforcement cooperation remains key to tackling any and all of them.

As the only global police organization, INTERPOL, with its 192 member States, is ideally situated to help its members disrupt cross-border criminal networks. INTERPOL has three major programme strategies: counter-terrorism, fighting cybercrime and combating organized and emerging crime. Our strategy against organized and emerging crime clearly establishes fighting human trafficking as one of INTERPOL's greatest commitments and aims to support member States in combating this constantly evolving phenomenon. INTERPOL has a special unit on human trafficking and child exploitation that provides training and operational support to law-enforcement officers with a view to effectively tackling such phenomena.

Border protection is also key to effectively combating human trafficking. Through INTERPOL's secure communication network, I-24/7, which facilitates communication between law-enforcement authorities around the globe in real time, all of our tools and databases can be accessed by them. The stolen and lost travel document database is particularly effective when it comes to countering trafficking in persons. It currently lists more than 70 million travel documents that have been reported by 175 countries. That data is readily available, but even the most comprehensive database is only truly effective if it is systematically used by front-line officers. We therefore encourage our member States to extend access to relevant databases to border-control officers who need the relevant information in order to make the right decision at the right moment. Let me demonstrate the effectiveness of our databases through an example: in the past two weeks alone, 185 child sex-abuse victims have been identified following checks against INTERPOL databases.

INTERPOL Notices — international requests for cooperation — are another effective tool in combating trafficking in persons. Everyone is familiar with Red Notices, which seek the location or arrest of wanted criminals — in this case, traffickers in persons. But there are other notices that are also highly effective, including the Green Notice, which is used to send warnings about crimes that might extend to other countries and is therefore particularly useful in the fight against trafficking in persons. Green Notices can warn neighbouring States that a known child-sex offender, suspected trafficker or trafficking victim is travelling to their region.

In conclusion, trafficking in persons is modern-day slavery. While it is clear that there are many forms of trafficking, they all have one thing in common: the abuse of vulnerable victims. INTERPOL takes a victim-centric approach focused on identifying and protecting victims. Within its mandate, INTERPOL will continue to do everything in its power to assist member States in identifying and disrupting the operative criminal networks that are behind human trafficking activities.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I call on the observer of the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Gorman-Best (International Organization for Migration): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) welcomes the progress made in and the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and supports its way forward. Over the past three decades, the IOM has been playing an active role in combating trafficking in persons. We fully support the Global Plan of Action and commend States Members of the United Nations for adopting the political declaration (resolution 72/1).

The Global Plan of Action is being reviewed at a time of unprecedented global mobility, with 244 million international migrants globally. At the same time, the world is facing multiple complex and protracted crises. There are more than 65 million forcibly displaced persons on the planet today, of whom 40 million have been uprooted within their own countries. We know that the rights of too many migrants continue to be violated during their journeys and have learned from first-hand experience that large-scale displacement caused by humanitarian crises, such as armed conflicts, natural disasters and protracted unrest, can create situations in which people become vulnerable to human trafficking. With this in mind, I would like to highlight three areas in which, from the perspective of the IOM, a more concerted effort is required.

First, while protection frameworks for victims of trafficking have been strengthened in recent years, less progress has been made in preventing human trafficking from occurring in the first place. The demand for cheap goods and sexual services is what drives trafficking. Efforts should therefore be made to reduce the demand for goods and services produced by trafficked persons and exploited migrants. This requires the engagement of those creating the demand, namely, consumers and businesses. Concrete measures include efforts to encourage, assist or obligate companies to establish decent working conditions for all employees in their supply chains.

Secondly, despite progress in creating legal frameworks to better protect those identified as victims of trafficking, the number of people benefiting from these protection schemes remains small when compared to the estimated millions of people who continue to be trafficked. In order to address this issue, it is important to increase the capacities of Governments and civil society in identifying and assisting all migrants in vulnerable situations, including victims of trafficking. Efforts should also target high-risk locations, such as border-crossing points, as well as sectors and industries in which there is a high risk of trafficking and for which effective responses are urgently required. It is also essential to ensure that anti-trafficking measures are systematically included in all phases of humanitarian action, especially in responding to conflict and disasters.

Thirdly and finally, greater investment is needed if we are to learn from anti-trafficking interventions and draw on the experience and expertise of the anti-trafficking community and others to date with a view to having informed anti-trafficking responses. We must work towards better collection, standardization and sharing of data on trafficking. We need to find ways to overcome obstacles to data-sharing, within a framework of strict confidentiality and appropriate safeguards so as to protect the personal data of individuals. This can be achieved through the use of multi-stakeholder open-data publishing platforms such as the IOM Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, which will be launched next month.

In conclusion, the Global Plan of Action is an excellent opportunity to reinvigorate our collective efforts. I would like to close by reiterating the deep commitment of the IOM to continuing to work with Member States and our other partners, including entities within the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, with a view to eradicating human trafficking within the overall context of facilitating safe, regular and orderly migration for the benefit of all.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in this high-level meeting.

In accordance with resolution 71/207 of 4 May 2017, we will now hear presentations of summaries by the Chairs of the two interactive panel discussions.

I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Belgium, in his capacity as Chair of interactive panel discussion 1.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium): Interactive panel discussion 1 was entitled "The Global Plan of Action and effective partnerships for the prevention and prosecution of trafficking in persons: achievements, gaps and challenges, also taking into consideration the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals". Speakers emphasized the importance of implementing appropriate prevention measures and effective prosecution of trafficking in persons, which constitute two fundamental pillars of the Global Plan of Action, together with protection and partnerships.

Speakers also noted the need to develop and implement holistic and comprehensive responses so as to fully eradicate trafficking in persons. Participants strongly emphasized the urgent need to implement a victim-centred and survivor-based approach to combating trafficking. They urged for an approach that gives priority to the human rights of victims and survivors, places them at the centre of efforts to

shape policy in operational responses and ensures adequate support for survivors' long-term reintegration and recovery.

Speakers also noted that victim protection and assistance were critical in ensuring the effective prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking and recommended that Member States increase their capacity to properly identify and subsequently protect and assist victims. Speakers also underlined the need to understand and address the root causes of trafficking in persons, which include, among other things, poverty, lack of economic opportunity, social-protection flaws, education, gender inequalities and other socioeconomic factors.

Participants recommended giving further attention to the complex interaction of factors that fuel inequality and discrimination and contribute to people's vulnerability to being trafficked. Participants noted that human trafficking is becoming an increasingly common feature in situations of conflict, when vulnerability to trafficking, from gender-based violence to discrimination to lack of economic opportunity, are further intensified.

Speakers noted that impunity, the breakdown of the rule of law and destruction of institutions during conflict significantly increase the conditions in which terrorists and criminal groups exploit the vulnerabilities of individuals, particularly women and children. Speakers recalled the increasing number of women, men and children who embark on dangerous journeys in search of dignity and safety, placing themselves at risk of abuse and exploitation by criminal groups. Participants recalled the close alignment of the commitments adopted by the General Assembly in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, each of which calls for the eradication of human trafficking in all its forms, among other things.

Finally, speakers, noting that the vast majority of trafficked victims were women and girls, emphasized the gender-based aspect of the phenomenon, urging the international community to address the sexual exploitation of women and girls in all contexts. In this respect, participants called for greater attention to be given to the linkages connecting trafficking, migration and gender, as there are numerous gender-specific vulnerabilities that put women and girls at particular risk. Here, again, the potential unleashed by implementing Sustainable Development Goal 5 was highlighted by some participants.

The President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Qatar, in her capacity as Chair of interactive panel discussion 2.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar): Speakers in interactive panel discussion 2 recalled that trafficking in persons is mentioned in three of the Sustainable Development Goals: Goals 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2. They further noted that trafficking also relates indirectly to many other Sustainable Development Goals and targets in the areas of human rights, migration, crisis resilience and social inclusion, as reflected in the pledge to leave no one behind. Participants also noted the importance of education and awareness-raising campaigns in preventing trafficking in persons, as highlighted in the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1). Above all, participants reaffirmed the importance of political will in the pursuit of multifaceted approaches to ending the crime of trafficking in persons. Speakers also reiterated the urgent need for greater and more predictable resources, including funding, to combat trafficking in persons.

Many speakers also highlighted the important role played by the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and called for enhanced support for the trust fund so as to allow its good work to continue. Participants further stressed the need for specific measures to be taken to address human trafficking resulting from situations of conflict, humanitarian crises and natural disasters. Speakers highlighted the need for systematic responses from the United Nations system, all humanitarian actors and the wide range of actors involved in conflict and crisis-affected areas.

Participants also recognized the particular vulnerability of migrants and refugees to being trafficked and called for them to be afforded greater protection. Speakers noted the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to the issue of trafficking, addressing all its aspects rather than focusing on individual components. Participants reiterated the need for a greater emphasis on partnerships and coordination. In this respect, speakers emphasized the central role that is played by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and underscored the

important roles played by civil society, academia and the private sector in supporting prevention, protection and prosecution efforts.

Finally, many speakers reiterated the important role that the private sector should play in addressing the issue of consumers and consumer demand as a driver of trafficking.

Statement by the President

The President: I cannot express how disturbed I was by the personal experiences recounted by Grizelda Grootboom, Shireen Ibrahim, Rani Hong and many others. I know that the Assembly was also shocked. I would like to thank Ms. Grootboom, a survivor and advocate, for bravely sharing her experience of being trafficked. Let us not forget Ms. Grootboom's plea to act when she said,

> "I really hope that the Global Plan will not be just the action of putting pen to paper, but that it will inspire action in every rural township and city and country" (*A/72/PV.24, p. 9*).

Ms. Grootboom spoke of the hope that the United Nations gives to victims and survivors. The Organization was created for people, not for Governments. We cannot let down her or the millions of other people who are trafficked around the world for billions of dollars. Ms. Mira Sorvino, Goodwill Ambassador Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight against Human Trafficking, commented that traffickers treat victims as mercantile goods. Ms. Rani Hong, a former victim who is now an advocate, recalled being taken from her mother at the tender age of seven and sold. We must support the dignity, human rights and humanity of the people who are affected by human trafficking.

As Ms. Hong said, this is a human issue that requires survivor-led solutions. We are all undoubtedly grateful for the Grizelda Grootbooms, Shireen Ibrahims, women and girls and boys and men of the world who are all people who deserve to live a decent and dignified life, without fear of trafficking. But I am particularly grateful to all of the advocates who give voices to the voiceless millions who are subjected to human trafficking.

In the opening segment of this high-level appraisal, we heard from the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, who highlighted the importance of holding perpetrators accountable. We also adopted a political declaration (resolution 72/1), which represents a strong renewed commitment for action going forward and reaffirmation of the Global Plan of Action. We must turn that gesture into practical action.

At this high-level meeting we heard statements from 98 Member States, whose representatives included some 10 Ministers and seven Deputy Ministers, as well as from six observers. As we just heard from the Chairs of the two interactive panel discussions, the Chairs of the delegations of Qatar and Belgium, the panel discussions were fruitful. However, the true measure of a successful meeting is whether the action points elicited are implemented afterwards. Our work is far from over.

We have essentially asked two questions. How far have we come in combating human trafficking? And how much further do we have to go? The following points were made during this high-level appraisal.

First, millions of people are victims of forced labour, sexual servitude and other forms of exploitation. Trafficking in persons affects the weakest and most vulnerable members of society, including women, girls and boys.

Second, a number of Member States highlighted the importance of using the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and other international instruments in our fight against human trafficking. Many Member States also shared their national plans and laws to combat human trafficking. They noted that it is a serious crime and a violation of fundamental rights.

Third, various Member States called on the Assembly to adopt approaches that are victim-focused, survivor-based, human rights-based, gender-specific and child-sensitive. There was also an emphasis on the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches, awareness-raising campaigns and bilateral, regional and international cooperation.

Fourth, the importance of addressing the root causes and factors contributing to trafficking was highlighted. They include poverty, a lack of education and opportunity and gender inequality. Many speakers pointed out that the increase in conflicts, insecurity and economic uncertainty that has forced millions

to leave their homes makes people vulnerable. Participants called for the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration to address the vulnerability of migrants.

Fifth, Member States reiterated that the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 5, 8 and 16, call on us to end human trafficking, with a particular emphasis on women and children.

Sixth, there were calls for increased access to justice and an emphasis on the importance of disrupting trafficking networks, facilitating prosecution and improving conviction rates of traffickers.

Seventh, many speakers drew attention to the huge profits being made from human trafficking and the need to address both supply and demand.

Finally, the importance of strengthening support for victims, particularly through the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, was highlighted. I commend those who have pledged contributions and encourage others to do the same.

In conclusion, we have heard from Member States on the progress made in fighting human trafficking. However, as many have highlighted, much remains to be done across the four pillars of prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership. As we take further action to combat human trafficking, let us keep in mind the fifth P — the reason that the United Nations exists — people.

I declare closed the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 107.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.28

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

28th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 3 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 110 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/72/1)

The President: Members will recall that the Secretary-General presented his annual report (A/72/1) to the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting on 19 September 2017.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): Once again, Mr. President, Armenia congratulates you on your election and assures you of its full support.

The Secretary-General's first report (A/72/1) since his election to lead our Organization reflects the considerable complexity of addressing the many objectives of our collective global agenda. We commend the Secretary-General for his strong focus on the major challenges before us and for the action he has taken in a short period of time. Above all, the report is a manifestation of a commitment to multilateralism as an effective instrument for addressing the mix of challenges. It is a refreshing reminder that it is not possible for individual States in isolation to address our global challenges, from climate change to population growth, from displacement and migration to inequality and exclusion, and from national institutions to global terrorism and threats to peace and security. Multilateralism is not optional, and we agree on that.

The United Nations will have to recalibrate itself to address the current global agenda. Without reform, it will be doomed to ad hoc reactions, inertia and reduced effectiveness. If we share a common and strong commitment to multilateralism, we simply cannot avoid reform. Armenia therefore reiterates its full support to the Secretary-General's reform agenda. We understand that it is a work in progress, and we also accept that while the Secretary-General enjoys a mandate from the membership to ensure that the United Nations system's capacity is strong and action-oriented, it is he who is responsible for taking action to adapt the system.

We greatly appreciate the Secretary-General's full engagement with Member States in sharing and testing his concept of reform. The past few months have demonstrated the Secretariat's serious intellectual and analytical engagement and the leadership of the Secretary-General in introducing a holistic reform agenda with three fundamental constituent parts — reform of the United Nations development system, management reform and reform of the peace and security architecture. We are looking forward to the next phases of the reform agenda's implementation.

Armenia particularly welcomes the Secretary-General's doctrine whereby prevention is placed at the heart of United Nations action. We have consistently promoted that concept, with particular emphasis on early prevention and action. We therefore welcome a holistic approach to prevention in all its complexity. If early prevention is accepted as the most effective method of interrupting deteriorating situations, a rights-based approach should carry particular weight.

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While the report rightly emphasizes the complementary nature of prevention and sustainable and inclusive development and recognizes the 2030 Agenda as the primary architecture for that, the reinforced emphasis on promoting and protecting all human rights, strengthening national institutions to that end and reinforcing international cooperation to promote the human rights agenda is still significant. We welcome the report's recognition of that premise. As it stresses, peace is indeed a human rights imperative.

Only strong States are capable of delivering effectively on this agenda in order to secure early prevention. Strong States are inclusive States, in which a strong civil society, an open media and a vibrant private sector all participate in advancing the national agenda. Early prevention depends on detecting, recognizing and acting on deteriorating human rights situations, and it remains the primary responsibility of States. That responsibility should be driven by a deep recognition of the risks of permitting the social fabric to be undermined, exposing vulnerable groups to serious human rights violations and amplifying the likelihood of atrocities.

The irresponsibility of inflammatory hate speech, intolerance, xenophobia, racial and ethnic profiling and the glorification of hate crimes, especially when such behaviour is led and encouraged by a State's political leaders, should be of concern to the entire international community and serve as a clear early-warning sign of potential conflict and atrocity crimes. The United Nations has the capacity to detect such early-warning signs and address them.

For its part, Armenia will continue working to help consolidate international efforts to prevent genocide. The year 2018 marks the seventieth anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. While about one third of United Nations Member States have still not acceded to or ratified the Convention, Armenia proposes to use the occasion of its seventieth anniversary to launch a resolute United Nations-wide campaign for raising awareness of the Convention and the need for its universalization. The International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, which we mark on 9 December, will be a fitting occasion for setting that campaign in motion.

While we emphasize the primary role of States in advancing the prevention agenda, in restating our commitment to multilateralism, we recognize the significant potential of international cooperation, backed by sufficient financing, to achieve collective good at the regional and international levels. The Secretary-General's stated objective of making the United Nations a better partner for Member States in their efforts to meet their responsibilities, and the fact that he has placed it at the heart of his reform agenda, is highly commendable.

In Armenia, we are gradually reaping the benefits of working with the United Nations and its country team in advancing our national development agenda, making full use of the 2030 Agenda as an international policy framework. Together with the United Nations Development Programme, we have been setting up a national platform to support accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, promote public-sector innovation and leverage private capital through impact investment. Armenia emphasizes the strong effects of innovation, creative education and inclusive and collaborative joint action by the Government, civil society and the private sector in advancing smart development.

Although middle-income countries will continue to require the attention of international financial institutions and the United Nations development system, regional and international partnerships remain as important as ever. As a landlocked developing country, Armenia particularly emphasizes the importance of accessible and unimpeded transport and transit corridors, and deplores unilateral coercive measures and the imposition of blockades and closed borders that worsen existing infrastructure deficits. We are looking forward to presenting our first voluntary national review at the meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in 2018, and are happy to share our experience with our partners.

With regard to its peace and security pillar, the Organization continues to face the considerable and multifaceted challenges of unresolved conflicts, global terrorism and other vulnerable situations. Displacement and migration remain an important focus of our collective agenda, including from the peace and security angle. In the past four years alone, Armenia has become a host to more than 22,000 displaced people from the Middle

East. We welcome the Secretary-General's concept of building anticipatory relationships with national and regional partners in order to prevent conflict, as well as addressing the root causes of conflict across the three pillars of peace and security, human rights and inclusive development. The evolving proposal for recalibrating the peacebuilding function of the United Nations within the peace and security architecture deserves close attention. Once again, we commend the focus on prevention in supporting an integrated, strategic and coherent approach to sustaining peace.

We also underline the importance of strong collaboration with regional settings, platforms and formats for sustaining peace and resolving conflicts and preventing duplication of effort, which has the effect of blurring the focus on sustainable, peacefully negotiated and compromise-based solutions, encouraging forum-shopping and undermining the efforts of parties in internationally mandated formats. In that respect, we are very grateful to the Secretary-General for his continued commitment and unequivocal support to the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in their efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

The Secretary-General concludes his report with the significant observation that the onus is on the United Nations to prove its worth. It is a call to heed the contradictory and complex challenges of our current agenda and to recall the foundations of the United Nations as it was born out of the destruction and calamity of the twentieth century's two devastating world wars. It is an invitation to reflect on our collective conscience, as the United Nations does not consist only of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat. As of today, it is constituted by 193 sovereign States sharing responsibility for the peoples in whose name, after all, the Charter of the United Nations was written.

Mrs. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Mr. President, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/72/1) and would like to express our appreciation for the work you have done in this first month of your mandate.

The United Nations is becoming more and more relevant to the people of the world every day. Our multilateral institution represents the hope of millions for a better world, where peace, goodwill and the yearning for a better world prevail over war, threats and fear of the disappearance of the human species. That is where we see the Organization's relevance and where the importance of multilateralism is affirmed once again. As the Secretary-General rightly says, multilateral action is more necessary than ever if we want to find effective solutions to today's converging challenges.

Although we have major commitments that provide a road map for achieving sustainable development, such as the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, there are continuing challenges to their implementation at both the national and international levels. According to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization, about 108 million people globally suffered from severe food insecurity in 2016, a drastic increase compared to the figure of 80 million in 2015. In addition, some 700 million people continue to live in extremely difficult conditions. The impact of climate change as reflected in recurring natural disasters, as well as in the virtual destruction of infrastructure in many developing countries, has led to the loss of many lives. We are concerned about the fact that developing countries lack the new, additional and predictable financial resources and the infrastructure and technology they need in order to implement these agendas at the national level.

The Cuban people have much to be proud of in terms of our achievements over the past six decades. To cite just a few examples, we were the first country to end illiteracy in Latin America. The World Health Organization recently certified Cuba as the first country on Earth to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis, and UNICEF has declared Cuba free of child malnutrition. All of this is the result of the high quality of our renowned free health and education systems, whose main concern is the right to life and the well-being of the Cuban people. Our revolution is of the people, by the people and for the people.

We are proud to belong to a zone of peace, as announced at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana in January 2014. Cuba emphasizes that the rules of coexistence, based on friendship, cooperation and respect, without interference in the internal affairs of other nations, are essential in international relations among States.

We reiterate that the best way to prevent conflict is to eradicate its root causes. In that regard, Cuba urges the international community to redouble its efforts to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including inequality, hunger and social exclusion. We affirm that unwavering respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law must continue to be a basic pillar of international security. That means ensuring full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, refraining from the use or threat of use of force in international relations and from interference in the internal affairs of States, as well as working to settle international disputes by peaceful means.

If we want to change the current unjust and profoundly unequal international order, we must stop applying unilateral coercive measures aimed at developing countries and put an end to colonialism and foreign occupation. We reaffirm that respect for political, economic, social and cultural systems that nations have freely chosen for themselves promotes not only sustainable development but also the maintenance of international peace and security. Cuba firmly denounces and rejects the unjust economic, trade and financial embargo that the United States of America has imposed on it for more than 50 years. Backed by more than 11 million Cubans and with the support of the international community, we call once again for the lifting of this cruel blockade, which is a violation of international law and of the human rights of all Cubans, whom it has deprived of their full enjoyment of the right to development.

We have taken note of the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at reforming the Organization. In order for the United Nations to be more democratic and effective, the General Assembly should be revitalized and strengthened and able to fully exercise the powers conferred on it by the Charter, without interference from the Security Council in its work or its entities. Reforming the Security Council with a view to making it more democratic and representative requires changing its composition and working methods, and we must not postpone that any longer.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize to you, Mr. President, and to the Secretary-General, Cuba's commitment to multilateralism and to safeguarding a prosperous and peaceful world for present and future generations.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia is grateful for the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/1), which lays out a valuable road map for the reforms that he has proposed and takes us on a geopolitical and strategic journey through the true role of multilateralism, led by the United Nations, at one of the most critical times that the world has seen since our Organization was founded, 72 years ago. The notion that we need a more analytical document rather than a summary of activities has been apparent for many years. We firmly believe that in October 2018, a year from now, when we meet once again in this Hall to analyse what this document has achieved, we will not just be describing the past and sometimes repeating sterile diagnoses but seeing the results of an ambitious and inclusive process of change, which Colombia fully supports.

A stronger, more effective multilateralism will enable the United Nations to achieve ambitious goals in the areas of peace, development and human rights. I can say with certainty that we have specific examples that have shown that it is possible to approach this task with optimism, despite the difficulties. Various Member States are seeing a greater good reflected in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Forum on Financing for Development and the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and are now signing up to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the Ocean Conference's voluntary commitments. That is cause for optimism. We are seeing evidence that when there is a high level of involvement and political will on the part of States and when they consistently and persistently work towards a win-win situation in our Organization, it is possible to establish an architecture that benefits humankind. Once again, I want to emphasize the indisputable relevance of the United Nations for addressing today's challenges.

Right now, if we are to achieve that win-win scenario in the area of international peace and security, we must be bold, as is evidenced in the report of the Secretary-General and in his vision for the future. As the Secretary-General says and has reiterated in recent months, in its approach to attaining sustainable peace the Organization should focus its efforts on prevention and on reacting more quickly in order to get results that can have the real impact that we all seek on the ground. As the report says, we must make our institution agile and able to deliver results.

I would like to mention two things that are particularly important to my delegation. The initiative for achieving gender parity at the senior management level by 2021, clearly outlined by the Secretary-General, brings us closer to a goal that has eluded us for decades. Through that proposal, we now believe it is possible. We should also give due recognition to the cross-cutting nature of the gender perspective in areas such as sustainable peace. In the case of my country and its journey towards peace, the United Nations has played a major role in it through the first special political mission of the Security Council to Colombia, which is ending this week, giving way to a new phase through a second, verification mission. In addition to that is all of the support we have been shown, which in the next few hours will culminate in a bilateral ceasefire with the National Liberation Army, a proof of the commitment to accompanying us on that journey.

That is why we can say, based on the lessons we have learned, that the proposal for a structural transformation of the Secretariat is essential and will lead to results that will literally be seen on the ground on a daily basis, aimed at achieving the principal goal of the United Nations, which is helping the men, women and children in every part of the world afflicted by conflict or war. We are of the firm belief that we can do this through peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations and special political missions that address our pressing political, military and humanitarian challenges. A dysfunctional bureaucracy should no longer be an obstacle. In order to achieve those goals and overcome the other challenges that the Secretary-General in his report, it will not be enough simply to make those proposals. A firm political commitment from all of us, the Member States, is crucial. The ground has already been prepared with important contributions. The time for diagnoses is over. We must move on to action, without delay, because that could mean the difference between life or death and peace or war.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1), which we note is his first since assuming office.

My delegation welcomes the report, which not only provides a sobering reminder of the multiple challenges facing the United Nations but also highlights the important role of the United Nations in addressing them. There are many crises yet to be resolved, but the world would be worse off if it were not for the work of the United Nations. As we heard from many leaders over the past week during the general debate, today we need the United Nations more than ever. A universal, rule-based multilateral system is essential if we are to solve the complex problems confronting the world. No nation can deal with transboundary problems alone. The United Nations has a critical role to play as a platform for cooperation based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit and international law.

My delegation is of the view that the figures and diagrams are a welcome addition to this year's report. They are very useful and contribute significantly to highlighting the progress achieved over the past year. For example, the improvement in the percentage of women who are heads or deputy heads of missions is clearly depicted in figure IX, along with the significant distance still to go before gender parity is achieved. We also greatly appreciate the summary of the Secretary-General's key initiatives in 2017 that appears right after the introduction in the report. This list clearly demonstrates that Secretary-General Guterres has set about tackling our multiple challenges head-on immediately after taking office, taking steps to make the United Nations fit for purpose and outlining a clear vision for how the United Nations can do better. We look forward to further updates on initiatives introduced in 2017. We would now like to make three points pertaining to the report.

First, we support the Secretary-General's commitment to reforming the United Nations in order to make it more effective, nimble and accountable, with a view to improving its delivery of its mandate and making a real impact on people on the ground. We particularly welcome his drive to make the United Nations more transparent and accountable to the membership. We share his view that the Organization must become more transparent and able to demonstrate a clear link between resources and results much more visibly and meaningfully. In that regard, we see the Secretary-General's annual report as an important mechanism for transparency and accountability. We would therefore like to see it further improved to focus on results, and specifically on what the United Nations is doing to make a difference to people on the ground. It would help if the report also included an annex with a one-page outline of some of the key statistics and figures showing how the United Nations had made a positive

impact globally over the past year that could then be used to profile the work of the Organization positively.

Secondly, just as the report begins with a snapshot of the Secretary-General's main initiatives, we would suggest that it conclude with a concise list of his priorities and objectives for the upcoming year. Of course, we understand that those may change during the year with the vagaries of international crises and developments. However, a list of priorities would enable Member States to better understand the key platforms in the Secretary-General's agenda for the year and, more importantly, objectively assess progress on them throughout the year. For example, we welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to achieving gender parity at the senior leadership level by 2021, which is listed as one of his main initiatives for 2017. A commitment that explicit not only communicates the Secretary-General's priorities and goals in a clear and measurable way, it also reflects a willingness on his part to be accountable to Member States for his actions and priorities and for achieving what he wishes to achieve. It shows that he is willing to lead from the top in transforming the Organization so that it is more focused on delivery and results than on mere process.

Thirdly and lastly, it is evident throughout the report that the United Nations and the Secretary-General attach great importance to effective partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, which often have a valuable understanding of the particular contexts and circumstances of individual regions. In South-East Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) plays a critical role in securing regional peace and fostering regional economic integration. We are pleased that the United Nations concluded a new plan of action with ASEAN in 2016. The partnership must be strengthened, and we look forward to the Secretary-General's visit to Manila in November for the upcoming ASEAN Summit.

For its part, as the incoming ASEAN Chair for 2018, Singapore looks forward to working with the United Nations and the Secretary-General to explore new ways to enhance the partnership with ASEAN. In that regard, it is our hope that next year the Secretary-General's annual report will devote greater attention to the issues and highlight the partnerships that the United Nations has with various regional organizations throughout the world. Ultimately, it is important that the Secretary-General and the United Nations lay out a clear plan and pathway for building partnerships with regional and subregional organizations around the world with a view to addressing the key global challenges of our time.

In conclusion, Singapore strongly supports the work of the United Nations, which has made a significant difference to the lives of people around the world. We need to safeguard and strengthen our multilateral rule-based system so that even the smallest country can survive and thrive as an independent, sovereign nation. In that regard, the work of the United Nations, particularly the work of the Secretary-General, is absolutely critical. Singapore reiterates its support for the Secretary-General, and we look forward to continuing to work constructively with him so that as the United Nations we can collectively build a better future for all our people.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We have read the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/1) on the work of the Organization with interest.

The United Nations is clearly faced with the difficult choice of staying within its customary limits and conducting business as usual or of moving forward, while listening to the voice of each individual State and taking account of their specific needs. In that context we support the Secretary-General's view on the crucial importance of revitalizing the commitment to the principle of multilateralism, which enables States to combine their resources so as to overcome the challenges and threats of today. Belarus has frequently noted that many conflict situations could be avoided if the United Nations were truly committed to a spirit of unity.

Working for political mediation at the early stages of a confrontation is unquestionably an effective part of the ways by which we can maintain international peace and security. In that regard, we agree with the Secretary-General's approach in terms of its focus on preventive action aimed at avoiding conflicts. Peacebuilding should not be perceived as solely intended for post-conflict situations. At the same time, we understand that new times bring new challenges and threats. In that regard, we believe the initiative of the President of the Republic of Belarus in launching a new Helsinki process is timely and has the potential to become a platform for dialogue aimed at overcoming differences among States all over the world.

Naturally, in summing up the past year, we have noted the Secretary-General's active efforts aimed at

reorganizing the United Nations. While in that regard we have confidence in the Secretary-General as an experienced international official, we do not believe that reform should be carried out without the broadest possible participation of Member States. Consultations must include all States, not just donor countries, because we firmly believe that new methods of work in the United Nations are especially important to States receiving assistance. It is only through joint efforts that we will be able to realize our goals most effectively and in a manner acceptable to all.

In any restructuring of the Organization, we should be careful not to eliminate positive aspects of the system that have been shown to be effective in practice. We also believe it is extremely important to avoid saddling Member States with additional financial and bureaucratic burdens, and to ensure that United Nations agencies are well coordinated and run smoothly on the ground, while fully respecting the principle that United Nations activities should respond to the national priorities of Member States.

We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to revitalize the Secretariat's peace and security architecture. Initiatives aimed at increasing the potential of United Nations peacekeeping forces and adapting their configurations as well as possible to current circumstances deserve broad support. In the context of improving peacekeeping, however, it is important to ensure that the process of technical reform does not become an end in itself, that we do not get bogged down in bureaucratic rearrangements and that we avoid arbitrarily expanding or shrinking the mandates and functions of the key United Nations bodies. Our joint and, most importantly, coordinated efforts should result in maintaining peace and security in vulnerable regions.

Where United Nations peacekeeping missions are concerned, the gender perspective plays an important role in improving the current peace and security architecture. In that regard, the Secretary-General's initiative to enhance the role of women in peacekeeping deserves the high praise. The Republic of Belarus is no stranger to that concept. The Belarusian military experts deployed to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and successfully carrying out their tasks there include women.

We concur with the Secretary-General that, although progress on development indicators is being made, there remain threats that could undermine global stability. That is a very immediate problem, and we believe that the United Nations should therefore take a more individual approach to solving specific problems, taking into account the unique characteristics and peculiarities of every country.

In our view, it is high time that the United Nations recognized the middle-income countries, which have still not been factored into the systemic activity of our Organization and for which there is still no coordinated assistance mechanism. We are talking about more than 100 countries, which are home to a majority of the world's population. They account for a third of the world's gross domestic product and a quarter of its exports and imports. Moreover, 73 per cent of all the people living in poverty are in middle-income countries. We hope that the Secretariat will help by formulating and adopting a strategy to help middle-income countries achieve sustainable development, based on the Sustainable Development Goals and on instruments analogous to those devised for other categories of developing countries. If we do not take the interests of this category of country into account we will never succeed in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We would also like to look at various current processes within the United Nations that have to do with routine interactions between States and the Secretariat. States need a clear and open framework for such interaction if they are to accomplish their tasks successfully. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic red tape in the Secretariat shows no sign of diminishing. We continue to see that the Secretariat is simply not listening to States' requests that it simplify the processes intended to serve them. The unilateral introduction of new rules to do with the technical aspects of the Secretariat often seriously complicates the practical daily work of States at Headquarters and compels them to focus on technical and logistical issues rather than on addressing substantive issues.

The process for organizing events for States at the United Nations remains cumbersome, and for some reason we still have to pay for it. The Secretariat's desire to divest itself of its direct administrative functions has forced Member States to establish a mechanism to improve the interaction between the Secretariat and the Permanent Missions of Member States. The enormous attention paid to this mechanism during the previous session emphasized how increasingly urgent it is that we

rid ourselves of the backlog of these problems, whose resolution frequently depends solely on the Secretariat's willingness to react quickly to constructive criticism and suggestions from the Missions.

We would also like to discuss the format for considering agenda items, specifically item 110, which we are currently considering, on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. Today, as in past years, only Member States participate in the debate. For some reason, the Secretary-General presented his report under agenda item 8, which is the general debate. In our view, that is quite wrong. Moreover, agenda item 8 has its own theme, which the President of the General Assembly decides on every year. We believe that the Secretary-General should also adhere strictly to that theme, but he should present his report under the appropriate agenda item. Some here may say that these are details and this is a practice that has evolved over the years, but it is precisely such practices, where things are winked at and there is an unwillingness to follow our own rules, that can lead first to indifference, then to misunderstandings and eventually even to conflicts, which all of us would like to avoid.

We should not forget that, first and foremost, the United Nations is us — the States. We should not speak of it as if it were some artificial organism with a life of its own. Only when we fully identify with the United Nations and feel that it belongs equally to all States, with no exceptions, will we begin to talk and listen to one another, and to agree with one another instead of trading verbiage and blame. Only then will we succeed in ridding ourselves of the criticism that the United Nations is unable to respond adequately to challenges and threats, and make the Organization truly useful and essential for all who need it.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): I would first like to convey our heartfelt condolences to those affected by the massacre in Las Vegas this past weekend. Our thoughts and prayers go to the families of the victims, and we wish those who were injured a speedy recovery.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his first report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1). It reflects his clear vision and firm determination to enhance multilateralism and strengthen the authority and role of the United Nations. This is indeed an Organization like no other. We agree with the Secretary-General that the world we live in presents a mixed picture of progress, challenges and opportunities. The United Nations has a unique role and responsibility to assist and empower all Member States and regional organizations to achieve the global goals that we have collectively identified and included in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the landmark agreements of 2015 on climate change and sustainable development.

The triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality are not unique to South Africa. They are present across all regions of the world and can be seen even between States. We need to be creative in finding ways to establish a more equal and just socioeconomic world order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As President Zuma noted during the general debate,

> "The current structure of the global economy continues to deepen the divide between the global North and global South ... Even within the developed countries, the gap between rich and poor remains wide and is of serious concern" (*see A/72/PV.9, p. 15*).

South Africa is committed to working with the United Nations to ensure that our efforts can put the world on a trajectory that will enable us to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, eradicate poverty, combat discrimination and uphold equality for all. "Leaving no one behind" should not become an often-repeated but meaningless phrase, for it is a call to action. In that regard, we note that the implementation phase of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has seen a drop in the means of implementation for supporting developing countries and a decline in financial contributions to the relevant multilateral bodies dealing with development and environmental issues. There has also been a concerted attempt to shift the burden of development assistance away from the commitments made by developed countries. South Africa counts on the leadership and good offices of the Secretary-General to mobilize adequate financial support, and thanks him for his commitment to maintaining a relentless focus on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

South Africa is continuing its commitment to ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and their promotion, protection and fulfilment. South Africa's commitment to human rights and to the promotion of human dignity and equality is unwavering, and respect for human rights has been the

defining feature of its political history. In his report, the Secretary-General notes that human rights are

> "investments which bring both immediate and long-term benefits in building resilience, redressing grievance, reducing inequality and advancing sustainable development" (*A/72/1, para. 92*).

South Africa emphasizes the importance of the global realization of economic, social and cultural rights and remains committed to helping the Organization to make concrete and tangible progress in that regard, including by drafting a convention, within the human rights family of instruments, on the right to development. That should be the case for all kinds of rights, including the right to self-determination.

South Africa deplores the ongoing denial of the right to self-determination for the peoples of Palestine and Western Sahara, which is a matter of serious concern to the people of South Africa. Those issues have become even more critical, given the current global instability and the increased number of conflicts. We are grappling with a multiplicity of new threats to the maintenance of international peace and security.

South Africa has long been an unwavering advocate for a more deliberate and focused use of United Nations conflict-prevention capacities, including early engagement with parties in disputes that could potentially become violent. In addition, the United Nations should not lose focus once initial stability has been achieved, and should continue to work in support of finding lasting political solutions. Too often we see a relapse into conflict after initial peace processes have been implemented. With that in mind, South Africa fully supports the vision of the Secretary-General to establish, as he says, a culture of prevention within the Organization, including by identifying and addressing the root causes of conflict. That is a process that requires coordination across the three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights and inclusive development.

South Africa remains convinced that peace and stability in the world will remain elusive if we do not address the nexus between security and development. We look forward to the joint United Nations-World Bank flagship study on how development and political processes interact for the prevention of violence. We support a United Nations that is agile and able to deliver results in complex environments. We look forward to the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on sustaining peace and holistic approaches to the peace spectrum. Sustainable peace requires not just changes to the structures and mindset of the Organization but also sustainable and predictable financing for all the Organization's mechanisms across the peace spectrum.

We welcome the Secretary-General's prioritization of partnerships with regional organizations, in particular the Framework for a Renewed United Nations-African Union Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda 2017-2027. We welcome the continued support for the efforts of the African Union to resolve conflicts on our contin ¬t through the promotion of African solutions to African problems. South Africa will also look favourably on the proposals for sustainable, predictable and flexible financing for African Union peace-support operations, based on an understanding of the comparative advantage of African Union missions and the added value to the United Nations. We remain concerned that arbitrary cuts to the peacekeeping budget will limit the ability of the Organization to respond to the multitude of global peace and security threats and the ability of our troops to deliver on their mandate.

We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to a universally desired goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. South Africa is pleased that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has been signed by more than 50 Member States, and we call on all Member States to join the momentum to prohibit all weapons of mass destruction. As President Zuma declared during the general debate, "there are no safe hands for weapons of mass destruction" (*A/72/PV.9, p. 16*).

South Africa believes that the United Nations needs to be effective, efficient, transparent, accountable and people-centred. In that regard, we have welcomed the inclusive and consultative processes led personally by the Secretary-General, such as the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism earlier in the year. Meaningful reform of the Secretariat requires ownership on the part of the entire membership of the Organization. Gender parity and greater geographical balance at all levels of the Secretariat are goals that we should already have achieved after 72 years. We look forward to constructive engagement on the proposals in the relevant committees. However, the reform of the Organization remains incomplete as long as the entire continent of Africa is excluded from its most powerful principal organ.

In conclusion, South Africa shares the view of the Secretary-General that

> "Multilateralism is not optional. It is the most effective vehicle, whether regional or global, for achieving the goals of peace, inclusive sustainable development and human rights for all." (*A/72/1, para. 14*)

We wish to thank the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for their services to the Organization, and look forward to working with the Secretary-General and all Member States to build a stronger, more effective and equitable United Nations that will deliver for all the peoples of the world.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's profound and sincere condolences to the people of the United States in the aftermath of the monstrous tragedy that recently occurred in Las Vegas.

We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his informative report (A/72/1). It is important that it focuses not only on the work of the Organization over the past year, but also on the tasks that it will face in the future. We share the document's key thought, namely, that the development of the international situation in the period under review was characterized by contradictory trends. In particular, the continuing transition to a multipolar world order has been accompanied by an increasing potential for conflicts, the growing threat of terrorism, deepening lines of division and powerful migration flows. A similar picture has been observed in the area of development. While progress has been made with a number of economic indicators, the problems of poverty and inequality are becoming more acute, the technology gap persists, climate change continues and unemployment among young people is on the rise.

Our global Organization has therefore been forced to take action under difficult conditions, constantly keeping its finger on the pulse of the evolving international situation and closely following and promptly responding to key changes. The Secretariat and the Secretary-General have provided essential support for Member States in that regard, and we thank them for their efforts.

We understand the need to adapt the United Nations to changing conditions and new realities. Its reform is an ongoing process. New institutions and structures are being established, the agenda is expanding and peacekeeping is becoming more multifaceted. At the same time, some assessments of what has happened in that regard and certain proposals with regard to ways to move the process forward that are presented in the report are not entirely clear. Let me focus on the following points.

On the subject of multipolarity, the report affirms that the United Nations is the best platform for uniting the efforts of Member States and civil society to solve current problems. We support the effort to make the Organization more transparent. However, we must emphasize that its work is traditionally of an intergovernmental nature, and it is Member States that have the prerogative to make decisions.

We believe that peacekeeping must not be considered in an overly broad manner or interpreted as some kind of new concept or direction in the work of the United Nations. Member States never have discussed, let alone agreed on, any action plan currently being put forward with regard to the broadly disseminated peacekeeping agenda. Identical resolutions adopted in 2016 by the General Assembly (70/262) and the Security Council (2282 (2016)) on the peacebuilding architecture proposed a unique definition of the term "sustaining peace". It is inextricably linked to the implementation of peacebuilding efforts and is the shared task and responsibility of both Governments and other stakeholders in national processes.

United Nations support for conflict prevention activities can be provided only in strict conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, the sovereignty of States and the leading role of the Security Council. The basic principles of international assistance in that regard are enshrined in Security Council resolution 2171 (2014). At the same time, the chief responsibility for preventing conflicts and for overcoming their consequences lies with the States themselves.

We believe that early prevention should not be based on some combination of certain conflict indicators, as that opens up opportunities for arbitrary or overly broad interpretations. There are no universal or automatic solutions to conflict prevention. Each situation requires a sensitive and impartial approach and a patient search for a unique solution. We must not forget that many conflicts have been triggered by foreign interference

in the internal affairs of States, including attempts to overthrow regimes that someone disliked.

Peace and security, human rights and development are unquestionably interrelated to some extent. However, it is important to have a clear understanding of the fact that development per se cannot guarantee peace and security, nor can peace and security guarantee sustainable development. Although they are related, each United Nations entity must retain its identity and functional specialization in order to avoid duplication of effort and interference in one another's areas of responsibility.

On economic issues, we cannot agree with the idea that the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council must serve as a framework for helping countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One-dimensional interpretations of the climate-change process as a cause of mass migration also raise doubts and do not reflect existing differences in the positions of countries on that issue.

The report fails to mention the Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development, which is the central platform for discussing development financing and how to achieve the SDGs. Instead, we are being asked to focus on strengthening the Development Cooperation Forum, which does not have a mandate to develop solutions in the field of financing.

The Russian delegation has traditionally been committed to the multifaceted topics of justice and the rule of law. However, the report presents those topics only as part of human rights. Furthermore, it states that when there is a lack of access to justice, certain segments of society may slip to violence. We consider that to be a one-sided and unreasonable approach. Other aspects of the rule of law, for example, the crucial international dimension, are not underscored at all. The same can be said of the section on drug control.

We are not convinced that the report should have paid so much attention to the International Criminal Court, a body that is outside the United Nations system. We also do not understand why an illegitimate mechanism to investigate crimes in Syria is presented as an unprecedented step. The General Assembly established the mechanism in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and exceeded its own authority in doing so. Once again, we call on the Secretary-General and Member States to renounce all forms of support for that mechanism.

Once again, we express our principled support for the Secretary-General's wish to improve the United Nations. However, given the sensitive nature of any changes in that regard, we are convinced that there is a need for clear and rational reform plans and that they should be strictly coordinated with all Member States. In that way, the call to strengthen multilateralism in international politics and to increase the authority of the Organization can be made a reality.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/72/1) is in many ways an inflection point. It depicts the international landscape and the United Nations itself in a manner that looks much different compared to just a year ago.

The euphoria surrounding the finalization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change seems to have substantially dissipated, even though large-scale efforts are under way in many States to achieve the objectives outlined in those goals. The resentment produced by the uneven impacts of globalization within and among national economies, the anxiety generated by large movements of peoples fleeing extreme levels of armed conflict and brutality across continents and the widespread devastation at the hands of nature's fury, which signal the urgency of climate action, are all depicted with startling starkness. Threats of nuclear escalation, armed conflict, massive refugee flows, ever escalating terrorist attacks, endemic poverty and underdevelopment, worsening environmental degradation and climate change, accelerating technological change, all have increased rather than diminished the demand for much closer and more effective multilateralism.

Yet the spirit of global partnership appears muted at best. While we have created a community of mutual dependence, we have yet to create one of mutual trust and respect. Multilateralism itself would seem to be in retreat. The world is clearly in a state of flux.

The first report of Secretary-General António Guterres on the work of the Organization brings out succinctly some of the global challenges we face. It points to many of the weaknesses in the United Nations system and makes a compelling case for reform.

Over the past several weeks, the Secretary-General has also elaborated some of his reform proposals for the United Nations system. We have conveyed our support

for the Secretary-General's overall efforts to work for reform. We appreciate the initiative to establish an Office of Counter-Terrorism so as to consolidate the United Nations efforts on that significant problem. We welcome the push towards a greater gender balance in senior appointments. The initiatives to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse are innovative. The efforts to deal with the fundamental fragmentation in the way that work is organized at the United Nations will improve delivery. Aligning authority with responsibility and the delegation of authority to managers at the field level, while changing organizational designs to strengthen accountability, are proposals that are all overdue. We appreciate the spirit that imbues those objectives, as well as the Secretary-General's willingness to change processes. We will address those specific issues as they are unveiled in greater detail. From a policy perspective, however, we need to assess whether the breadth of suggestions for reform matches the depth of the challenges we are facing.

Human history is, in part, also the story of our adaptation to new technologies. Today, the gap between what technological advances permit and what the current system of multilateral cooperation is prepared to address is growing in many areas. Technical achievements, which we believed to be capable of solving all our ills, are actually accentuating our sense of insecurity. Will the reform being talked about facilitate efforts to address that dichotomy? Can we, in all honesty, say that the reforms that we are contemplating will make us fit for purpose to address the challenges posed by the furious pace of technological advances in artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, geoengineering, directed-energy systems and additive manufacturing? Can we say that we are getting prepared through the current set of reform efforts to address issues of global commons or spaces that no State controls, but on which all States rely for security and prosperity? As the commons — our oceans and outer space — get congested and contested, will the contemplated reforms address the challenges that those spaces will pose? For example, are we able to assess the concerns for "we the people" resulting from the more than 22,000 man-made objects orbiting the Earth? Cyberspace is just one more example of the frontier areas where we remain out of our depth in multilateral terms.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Speaking very evocatively at the opening of the high-level week, the Secretary-General said that rather than a world at peace, we have a world in pieces. The aging pillars of a creaking and crumbling post-Second World War order are not amenable to improvement by minor stabs at modest reform at the margins. If we are not to remain prisoners of historical destiny for all time, and if we are to keep pace with the fast-moving threats we face, we will have to go beyond piecemeal changes. If not, we will be condemned to global governance in pieces too.

If we await dramatic crises to force our hand to get us to address such issues, we do so at the cost of deepening the crisis of relevance and performance of the United Nations in particular, as well as the legitimacy and effectiveness of multilateralism in general. If we choose to collectively address those issues as part of a quest to strive proactively for peace, justice and order, it will represent a necessary step in piecing together a system that is increasingly seen to be in pieces.

India, for its part, stands ready to work with the Secretary-General and the membership in finding a pathway to a more lasting peace and prosperity for all.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): Let me start by conveying Pakistan's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1). We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that the international situation is marked by conflicting trends. While the international community has made important progress in its fight against extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease, the dividends resulting from those gains have been unequally distributed. Inequality, exclusion and a lack of opportunity continue to blight the hopes and aspirations of millions of people, especially women and girls.

As advancements in communication and commerce have made the world more interconnected and interdependent, there are powerful voices of discontent casting doubt on the very foundations of the liberal economic international order. At the same time, changing climatic patterns have unleashed nature's fury in unforeseen and unprecedented ways.

Internal conflicts and violence continue to undermine the prospects for peace and stability across many parts of the world. Protracted conflicts have also spawned unprecedented humanitarian crises, if not emergencies. Already displaced by the ravages of war, countless millions of people, including children, have

been forced to wage fresh battles for survival against famine and disease. Meanwhile terrorism, which has mutated into new and more dangerous forms, has yet to be defeated.

At a time when international cooperation is needed most to address those interrelated and mutually reinforcing challenges, the world is, sadly, more divided and polarized. As the Secretary-General urges in his report, we must revive faith in multilateralism so as to face the most pressing, indeed shared, challenges of our times. The United Nations remains indispensable to our efforts to restore order and ensure global peace, stability and prosperity.

Just as the world has evolved over the past 70 years, so must the United Nations, so that it is fit for purpose. Today, more than ever, we need the United Nations to provide the parameters, processes and platforms for global cooperation that are essential to addressing our wide-ranging challenges to peace, security and development. We welcome the efforts launched by Secretary-General António Guterres to revitalize the United Nations capabilities for peace and security, development and management.

By the same token, the Security Council cannot remain isolated from the process of change. A comprehensive reform of the Security Council is therefore essential, but as Pakistan's Prime Minister told the Assembly last month, the process should transform

> "the Security Council into a more representative, democratic and accountable organ, rather than an expanded club of the powerful and the privileged." (*A/72/PV.14, p. 8*)

We consider the Secretary-General's emphasis on prevention both apt and timely. A surge in diplomacy is the best response to any threat to peace. Over the years, peacekeeping has remained the United Nations flagship enterprise for conflict prevention, mediation and sustaining peace.

Among the world's top troop-contributing countries, Pakistan is proud to have played its part in bringing hope to the lives of millions of people caught up in conflict and war across the world. This year alone, five Pakistani peacekeepers made the ultimate sacrifice to uphold international peace and security. Our peacekeepers have always displayed the highest standards of professionalism and conduct. Pakistan was also among the first batch of countries to sign the United Nations voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

Respect for human rights is at the core of the Secretary-General's call for prevention and sustaining peace. But peace can only be built on a foundation of justice. There can be no peace without justice. Yet, these universal ideals are being violated, in plain sight of the international community, in Palestine, in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere.

The continuing Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir is a travesty of justice, law and morality. That dispute has been on the agenda of the United Nations and the Security Council for almost 70 years. But the people of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir still await the implementation of numerous Security Council resolutions that promised them their inalienable right to self-determination.

The Kashmiri people, men, women and children, have waged a heroic and popular struggle against occupation. India has used brutal and indiscriminate force to suppress the indigenous freedom movement. Hundreds of innocent, unarmed Kashmiris have been martyred in the recent wave of protests; countless others have been blinded and maimed by pellet guns in what has been widely and rightly described as the first mass blinding in human history.

Indian atrocities in Jammu and Kashmir have been well documented by international human rights organizations. India does not deny those actions. It defends them. It does not express remorse for the acts of the perpetrators of those war crimes. It rewards them with national honours. To cover up its crimes against the Kashmiri people and to divert world attention, India resorts to daily violations of the ceasefire along the Line of Control in Kashmir. It claims, falsely, to have conducted a surgical strike across the Line of Control. That claim, and India's repeated threats to conduct such strikes across the Line of Control, constitutes a flagrant violation of the injunction against the use or threat of use of force enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. That gives my country sufficient reason to respond in exercise of its right to self-defence. By making such false claims and blatant threats, India's leaders seem to be attempting to provoke a conflict with Pakistan. All I can say to them is that they should not underestimate Pakistan's resolve and capacity to defend itself. Any aggression or intervention will meet a matching and

effective response from our armed forces and from the people of Pakistan.

Nor should the United Nations ignore India's open threats to use force. The international community should take urgent action to persuade India to halt its provocations against my country. The nations of the world represented here must not tolerate India's impunity in committing its crimes against humanity in Kashmir under the flimsy cover of a response to terrorism. The only terrorism in Kashmir is State terrorism by India. The brutalization of peoples kept under foreign occupation is, in fact, considered as the gravest form of terrorism by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which includes almost two thirds of the General Assembly's membership.

Pakistan has been on the front lines in the fight against terrorism. Our military campaigns, involving 200,000 of our troops, have crushed and eliminated terrorist groups in our frontier regions and our towns and cities. We have paid a heavy price — 27,000 civilians and military personnel have been martyred, making the ultimate sacrifice, and many more have been injured and maimed for life, but that does not deter us. We will continue until we have eliminated the last terrorist from our soil.

But as we all know, terrorism is now a global phenomenon that must be addressed comprehensively in all its forms, including State terrorism. The global threat of terrorism cannot, however, be defeated unless we address its underlying causes. Poverty and ignorance are part of the problem, as are social and political exclusion, foreign intervention and the denial of economic and political justice. Similarly, extremist ideologies must also be challenged and countered.

Finally, in conclusion, I would like to quote Dag Hammarskjöld, who famously said that the United Nations "was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell." In the midst of the profound and imposing challenges confronting us today, the United Nations remains our best hope to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Pakistan's commitment to our parliament of man is firm and abiding, and we will work collectively, collaboratively and together for a better and brighter future, for all of humankind.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): The Secretary General's report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1) represents a tale of mixed fortunes. It recalls the significant strides that we have made in several areas and across various regions. We welcome the fact that millions of people have been lifted out of poverty, more children are achieving greater levels of education and more women are entering politics. Sadly, those encouraging signs have been met with very disheartening developments that place our achievements at risk.

The report points, quite worryingly, to the disturbing trends in the increasing numbers of terrorist attacks, greater inequality and marginalization, and growing humanitarian crises. It provides a list of various challenges that affect us as an international community and threaten our commitment to leaving no one behind. We therefore agree with the Secretary-General in his assessment that the Organization has to be more productive, proactive, dynamic and nimble in its approach to many of those issues.

My delegation is especially pleased that the report acknowledges the particular challenges that beset middle-income countries. The recognition that large numbers of people struggling with poverty live in middle-income countries reinforces our long-standing contention that per-capita income as a percentage of gross domestic product does not reflect the full picture of the development status of middle-income countries. The sense of exclusion of which the Secretary-General speaks is real and threatens prospects for citizens to live productive and decent lives.

The Secretary-General makes a timely and relevant assertion that the United Nations advocacy for disarmament is more vital than ever. Multilateral action on all disarmament and non-proliferation fronts remains central to our common endeavour. That is vividly demonstrated by the startling reality, highlighted by the Secretary-General, that conventional arms remain the predominant means of killing and destruction. The report's consideration of the effects of crime on development is instructive.

As a country challenged by high levels of crime and violence, we welcome the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to support national and regional programmes aimed at stemming that scourge. Given the symbiotic relationship of crime, violence and drugs, we accord great importance to the Organization's continued work in that field. Jamaica remains particularly keen on exploring the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, which was held in 2016.

We join in celebrating the historic adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and share the concerns about the additional challenges of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and the potential harmful use of outer space, which the Secretary-General also highlights in his report.

As witnessed throughout the year and most pointedly during the recent passage of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, extreme weather phenomena and climate change present real and serious challenges for each and every one of us. The devastating impact of natural disasters on human life and property is undeniable. The Secretary-General's strong signal of his commitment to responding to those challenges is therefore welcome. So too is the work being undertaken by Member States to draw up an international legally binding instrument in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to conserve and sustainably use marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

We support the focus of the Secretary-General on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and children. We endorse the stance that he has taken that the United Nations must continue its efforts to that end. We also support the focus on the promotion and protection of human rights as integral to efforts aimed at preventing conflict and at sustaining peace. We underscore that such efforts should also take into account all economic, social and cultural rights in the consideration of peace as a human rights imperative.

The joint United Nations-World Bank flagship study on the manner in which development and political processes interact to prevent violence should provide some useful insights into some aspects of that dynamic. However, funding will no doubt remain critical. The empowerment of vulnerable groups will remain an essential aspect of the United Nations work. My delegation is pleased that that has been highlighted in the report and is supportive of that approach.

We read with interest the Secretary-General's reference to the important role that partnerships can play in advancing the work of the Organization. However, we would have welcomed a specific reference to the Caribbean Community in that context, as our subregion is committed to strengthening its cooperation with the United Nations.

In the specific case of Haiti, we are pleased with the efforts being made to respond to the cholera outbreak in that country and welcome the acknowledgement of the role that the United Nations has to play in effectively addressing the crisis. We urge all Member States in a position to do so to contribute to the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund that has been established to assist Haitians affected by the epidemic.

I conclude by reiterating my delegation's commitment to the Organization and our shared vision of a United Nations that is responsive to the needs of its constituents.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to touch briefly on some of the issues reflected in the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1) that we find noteworthy. As the world is witnessing a plethora of complex and interconnected challenges, we join the Secretary-General in his assessment in paragraph 4 of the report that

> "now more than ever, multilateral action is needed to find effective solutions to this mix of challenges".

We also share his concern in paragraph 140 of the report that

> "multilateralism is being questioned at a time when we most need coherent global responses to these interconnected events".

In a very pertinent case, we would like to reiterate that the Iran nuclear deal, as a testament to the value of diplomacy, should be protected from any attempt to modify it, as that will undermine not only the agreement, but also diplomacy and multilateralism in general. In that context, we renew our call to the Secretariat to take a more constructive approach to fulfilling its reporting function.

On preserving international peace and security, the report rightly points out that the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a step towards the universally desired goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. In our view, it also represented a collective protest against the almost 50-year violation of nuclear disarmament obligations by the nuclear-weapon States. In that context, we also expect it to include the alarming trends of the new nuclear arms race and nuclear-arms modernization race, as well as the strong international call that has been made for putting an immediate end to such races.

On the issue of peacekeeping operations, Iran believes that such operations are the strongest and

most effective tools for maintaining global peace and security, as well as for containing conflicts. However, as recommended by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations in its report (see A/70/95), Iran believes that United Nation peacekeeping missions should not engage in military counter-terrorism operations, which should be done by host Governments.

The establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism to lead the counter-terrorism-related activities across the United Nations system has the potential to enhance United Nations capacity, strengthen coherence and coordination, and improve internal and external communication. It could also strengthen the United Nations capacity to address the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. It is imperative to allocate sufficient financial resources for the Office from the United Nations regular budget. We note with concern that in the new structure, most of the positions will be funded through voluntary funds. Moreover, there should be sufficient and sustainable funding available from the regular budget for capacity-building to meet the needs of Member States upon request, and such funding should be made available in an impartial, balanced and sustainable manner.

As for the ongoing United Nations reform consultation process on development, it is essential to bear in mind the significance of the alignment and compatibility of the United Nations development system with the policies, priorities and needs of developing countries, with an emphasis on national ownership and leadership at the country level.

In that context, we would like to recall the scope and mandate of the operational activities for the development of the United Nations system envisioned in resolution 71/243. Our region is now grappling with numerous human, environmental and social challenges. Achieving peace and sustainable development in tandem has become the Middle East's most urgent priority. In that regard, the United Nations reform process should help the countries of our region to meet their special needs and challenges. It is also important that the United Nations regain its leading role in shaping world public opinion, rather than following biased media trends or the agenda of donor countries.

By way of conclusion, my delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's efforts regarding the reform of the management of the Organization. I would like to emphasize that any reform effort must strengthen the ability of Member States to perform their oversight and monitoring roles, as well as preserve the intergovernmental, multilateral and international nature of the Organization. We will carefully examine the Secretary-General's reform proposal and actively participate in the consultations on that issue. The world today faces exponentially greater risks, but we also have greater opportunities. Let us join hands to confront the risks, while appreciating the new opportunities for a better and brighter future.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, we express our deepest condolences to the United States for the loss of innocent lives in the massacre that took place last weekend, and we wish the injured a speedy recovery.

We thank Secretary-General Guterres for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1), which demonstrates that the United Nations is the only global, multilateral platform that can address global issues, threats and chalienges. We highly commend his courage and commitment to improving the work of the Organization and taking it into the twenty-first century. His forward-looking, yet pragmatic vision and leadership will bring the international community together as we support his thrust to counter global risks by promoting both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace agenda, the two key trajectories of the United Nations.

Kazakhstan fully endorses and will work with others on the Secretary-General's plan for bold and much-needed system-wide reforms in areas ranging from management and gender parity to human resources, in order to improve the coordination of the United Nations development system. We will be actively engaged with others in efforts to achieve enhanced accountability and transparency and to pool our resources to make the United Nations more cost-effective and result-oriented.

The Secretary-General's approach and focus on prevention, using the tool of preventive diplomacy, is also one of the core principles of my country's foreign policy. It was in 1992, soon after we became independent, that the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, convened the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), an intergovernmental forum to promote peace, security and stability in Asia and beyond. We will work towards a greater synergy between the United Nations and the CICA.

As the country representing Central Asia on the Security Council for the first time in the history of the United Nations, we will support the United Nations and the Secretary-General's efforts by promoting security and stability in the region, by fully implementing the mandate of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary.

Compliance with international law is the bedrock of national, regional and global peace and security. Upholding the principles of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of States will thereby prevent humankind from repeating the tragic mistakes of the past. We therefore underscore the crucial need to reaffirm the principles of international law.

We welcome the Secretary-General's initiatives to reform United Nations peacekeeping and the restructuring of its mechanisms at Headquarters and in the field, with a view to strengthening the Organization's ability to prevent and counter asymmetrical conflicts. We agree that clear mandates with achievable goals and the use of regional forces will bring about greater relevance, effectiveness and accountability. Engaging new contributing countries would reduce the deployment gap for rapid-reaction emergency responses. We support the Secretary-General's concept of sustaining peace by using all tools in an integrated manner and in parallel. Kazakhstan is committed to supporting the United Nations by enlarging its contribution to United Nations peacekeeping missions.

The Secretary-General has spoken of the need to fight terrorism and violent extremism. In June, therefore, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Central Asian States had the opportunity to work with the Secretary-General in Ashgabat, when he participated in the High-level Dialogue on Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia. Kazakhstan will work closely with the newly established United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to fight international terrorism through a long-term comprehensive approach. We are therefore proposing the adoption of a code of conduct for the achievement of a terrorism-free world, which will positively strengthen regional and global cooperation in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Kazakhstan is fully engaged in fighting the nuclear threat, one of the most urgent tasks of our time. The current year has witnessed important developments, such as the historic adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which hopefully will lead to a total ban on nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan actively participated in that process and will sign the Treaty on the completion of its internal procedures. We also inaugurated the International Atomic Energy Agency's low-enriched uranium nuclear bank to facilitate the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the strengthening the regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Kazakhstan shares the view of the Secretary-General that the United Nations now faces the additional challenges of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and the potentially harmful use of outer space. We believe that the international community should take appropriate and coordinated measures to cope with those new challenges.

Kazakhstan is deeply committed to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, promoting justice and equality for all and countering climate change. Despite our abundant conventional energy resources, we are deeply committed to a diversified, green economy with alternative energy sources. That sort of thinking led us to choose "Future Energy" as the theme for the Astana Expo 2017, which opened on 10 June and concluded on 10 September. Some 122 countries and 18 international organizations, including the United Nations system, showcased their best solutions for gernerating renewable sources of energy and combating climate change.

Our commitment to the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is reflected in the strategic national legislation and programmes that our Government has adopted, as well as our partnership with all countries, especially the most vulnerable, which include the least developed, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. My country will therefore focus on enabling all countries in such special situations to reach their own vision. Our consistent approach to solving problems is threefold, consisting of strengthening the security-development nexus, taking a more regional approach rather than a narrow country focu, and establishing a well-coordinated development strategy based on the United Nations system, best described as "One United Nations", with the full engagement of women and young people and aimed at 50-50 representation. Notwithstanding the challenges, by working with the Secretary-General, the United Nations, Member States

and others, we will see a better future for people and the planet.

Ms. Hailu (Ethiopia): I would like to start my brief remarks by applauding the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1). It is indeed comprehensive and covers all aspects of the work of the Organization. It does that succinctly and is therefore very helpful for framing exchanges of views among Member States at a time when the role of the United Nations has perhaps become more critical than ever.

Let me say that we agree with the thrust of the narrative that underlines the report. Though the world has seen significant progress in reducing poverty, expanding health and education and improving gender equality, the current global context presents new risks for our hard-won collective progress, as the report rightly acknowledges. Poverty, inequality, economic fragility, unemployment, conflict, the adverse impacts of climate change, governance shortcomings and illegal migration are among the challenges that threaten our agenda, which seeks to create a world free from want and fear. Hence, two years after adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with much optimism, we cannot deny that that optimism has dissipated. We have to recreate that optimism, because there is no alternative. It is therefore crucial to find effective and durable solutions to the multiple common challenges we face, while maximizing the benefits of globalization for all. That is how we will realize the vision of leaving no one behind.

The multifaceted and transnational challenges require transboundary actions, since no single country, no matter how powerful, can solve our global problems alone. Although the world has transformative and comprehensive development frameworks, what is required is political determination and commitment to acting collectively through renewed faith in a more effective multilateralism and revitalized global partnership and solidarity. In that regard, the commitments of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, should be translated into action aimed at eradicating all forms of poverty, mobilizing sufficient financial and technological resources and combating the negative effects of climate change.

Furthermore, the United Nations should be fit for purpose, so that it can support developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable countries, in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in line with their national priorities. In that respect, we support the reform agenda of the Secretary-General. Without underestimating the specific challenges that each country faces, it is important to provide special attention to the most vulnerable countries, in particular the least developed countries. Meaningful priority should therefore be given to countries in special situations, with the aim of implementing the global development frameworks and undertaking the United Nations reforms. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to further strengthen United Nations peace and development efforts in Africa. We support the recent agreement reached between the United Nations and the African Union, and we look forward to the Secretary-General's report on financing African-led peace support missions this coming November.

Achieving inclusive and sustainable development, as well as building a participatory democratic system, has been the overriding policy objective of the Ethiopian Government. By implementing integrated development strategies through a participatory and decentralized federal approach, Ethiopia has been able to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, we have continued to register encouraging results in executing our current national development plan, the Growth and Transformation Plan 2015-2020, which integrates the Sustainable Development Goals. In implementing our Plan, along with reducing poverty through rapid and inclusive economic growth, we are devoting special attention to structural economic transformation and building a green and climate-resilient economy.

We have made people-centred progress by reducing poverty, enhancing the well-being of our people and increasing the resilience and the productive capacity of our economy. However, poverty, unemployment, deficits in good governance, inadequate development funding and the adverse consequences of climate change are among the challenges that we continue to face. By taking lessons from our successes and our shortcomings, we seek to intensify our efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, in accordance with our specific national conditions. No matter what we may have achieved, we are fully aware that without renewed international cooperation, we are unlikely to fully prevail over poverty. That is why we believe in multilateralism, and promoting that objective

is also in our national interest. We believe that applies to all countries.

Let me conclude by reaffirming that the United Nations system in general, including the General Assembly, has an important role to play in advancing and advocating for the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We believe, as the report of the Secretary General underscores, that it is through a coherent and coordinated approach that fully embraces the three pillars of development that we can realize people-centred peace and prosperity for all.

Mr. Awad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation has taken note of the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1), and I would like to comment briefly on some of the issues that were mentioned in the report.

We welcome the report's discussion of the challenges that the United Nations is facing, such as the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, climate change, equality, transparency, United Nations reform, multilateralism and the culture of early prevention. We also affirm the role of Member States in all of the above, bearing in mind that the United Nations is an intergovernmental organization and that Member States are the decision-makers in this body. My delegation welcomes the mention in the report of the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, because it should enhance advocacy efforts and the mobilization of resources to expand the scope of efforts aimed at enhancing initiatives to prevent conflict and dealing with root causes leading to the recruitment of terrorists. We would like to note that we have previously expressed our reservations about the financing of the Office by one country — a country that is known for financing terrorism — instead of from the regular budget of the United Nations. My country's experience in combating armed terrorist groups that are supported and funded by certain countries is well known to all and deserved specific mention in the Secretary-General's report, which, unfortunately, did not happen.

Secondly, the Secretary-General's report made no mention of the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and other Arab territories that have been occupied since 1967, or of all the resolutions that have called for an end to the worst occupation ever known to humankind.

Thirdly, the report does not mention the unilateral group of measures that have been imposed on several countries, including Syria, by the United States of America, the European Union and other States in a manner that is not in line with international law or the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation strongly rejects a statement in paragraph 115 of the Secretary-General's report, which says

> "In an unprecedented step, the General Assembly established the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011."

As is well known, my delegation rejects that Mechanism, which was established by an illegitimate, non-consensual resolution (71/248), full of political and legal holes. The resolution was submitted by countries that are well known for their anti-Syrian agendas. Moreover, the Mechanism's establishment represents blatant interference in the internal affairs of my country in a manner that is not in line with the principles and purposes of the Charter or with international law.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization contained in document A/72/1?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, I would like to remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Gambhir (India): I am taking the floor to respond to the remarks made by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan in the debate earlier today.

Even as we heard speakers address concerns of the present and the future, we also heard a lonely voice from the wilderness articulate a narrative of the past. That voice focused on an issue that has not even been deliberated on in the United Nations for decades and that Pakistan tries to keep alive via procedural stratagems even as the world has moved on. Yesterday's people, reflecting antiquated mindsets of bygone times,

are symbolic of what holds us all back. My delegation does not wish to waste the Assembly's precious time by engaging further in such distractions.

Mr. Warraich (Pakistan): My delegation is compelled to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply to the statement just made by the representative of India. Despite what some may believe, the repetition of groundless accusations and fabrications does not lend them credibility. They may at best satisfy a self-delusional notion of reality. But a farce can only go so far. Let me recall for the benefit of the Indian representative that Jammu and Kashmir is not a part of India. It never was and never will be. It has been recognized by the United Nations and the international community as disputed territory. The Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir is therefore illegal. No amount of obfuscation, diversion, deceit and aggression can hide that fact.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 110?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Before concluding, I wish to make an announcement concerning the membership of the General Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. Members will recall that for the seventy-second session, the President, the 21 Vice-Presidents and the Chairs of the six Main Committees were elected on 31 May 2017. Subsequently, I would like to inform members that on 28 September, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom of Iraq was elected Chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session in order to replace His Excellency Mr. Mouayed Saleh, and is accordingly a member of the General Committee for the session. I congratulate the Chair of the First Committee on his election.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.29

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

29th plenary meeting
Monday, 9 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 140 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/519)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. Therefore, if there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, may I take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Fifth Committee that is before the Assembly today?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/519), I would like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations", without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 72/2).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 140.

Agenda items 9 and 14

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/72/3)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/72/255)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In connection with agenda item 9, I would like to recall that, pursuant to resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided, at its 2nd plenary meeting, held on 15 September, to consider agenda item 9 in its entirety in plenary meeting, on the understanding that the administrative programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 9 in its entirety in plenary meeting, the

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relevant parts of chapter I of the report (A/72/3) that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees would be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

In connection with agenda item 14, members will recall that, pursuant to resolution 57/270 B, of 23 June 2003, the Assembly decided to consider under the item the chapters of the annual report of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including through the participation of the President of the Council in its discussions.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Cristián Barros Melet, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, to introduce the report of the Council.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly the 2017 report (A/72/3) of the Economic and Social Council.

In 2017, the Economic and Social Council built on the initial phase of implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related commitments and integrated lessons learned from years 1 and 2.

We have made a good start, but further work, coordination and innovation are needed. We must ensure that the impact of the Economic and Social Council system as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. That includes the work of its segments and forums, functional and regional commissions and expert bodies. As a Bureau member during the 2017 session, I can attest to the Economic and Social Council's commitment to strengthening its support to Member States and development partners. Let me briefly outline some of the highlights of our work from the past year.

First, the Economic and Social Council built on its successes in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was held under the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" and reviewed a subset of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in depth. During the three-day ministerial segment, 43 countries presented their voluntary national reviews. Common themes in those reviews included the importance of bringing all the parties together in a multi-stakeholder approach to implementation, as well as the critical importance of involvement at the highest levels of Government. In addition, the Forum was enriched by 147 side events, nine learning courses, several special activities, an SDG business forum and a partnership exchange.

The second Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development follow-up demonstrated its importance as an inclusive platform for discussion of a range of key issues. The outcome document (E/FFDF/2017/3) reaffirmed the key elements of the Addis Ababa Agenda and included new commitments on policies and actions, such as the acceleration of national and international efforts, sending a strong signal of our commitment to multilateralism and the global partnership for sustainable development.

Secondly, the Economic and Social Council's 2017 session established a shared understanding of the adjustments needed to enable the United Nations development system to get better results in a changing development landscape. The Economic and Social Council's two-year dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system laid the foundations for a landmark resolution (71/243) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the United Nations system, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2016. The resolution requested that the Secretary-General lead a process of change by presenting proposals and rallying the development system around those proposals.

In July, the Secretary-General presented the Economic and Social Council with an outline of his reform proposals, seeking the views of Member States in order to develop the proposals in detail this autumn. The proposals include the two remaining mandates — the system-wide strategic planning document and the proposal on the resident coordinator system. The Economic and Social Council continues to be the main forum for ongoing consultations on the repositioning exercise and the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. Member States used the Economic and Social Council's 2017 segment on operational activities for development to address implementation of the resolution in detail.

Thirdly, the engagement of stakeholders in the work of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations development system continued to intensify. The

role of the Economic and Social Council as a platform for multi-stakeholder participation is unrivalled. Last year, 460 non-governmental organizations obtained consultative status with the Council, a new record, and the meetings of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations were webcast, thereby helping to improve communications and transparency.

The Economic and Social Council's Youth Forum continues to grow in terms of participation and impact and underlines the potential of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for promoting solidarity and action among young people in all countries. Young people are eager to be involved in implementing the SDGs in concrete ways, including through youth advisory councils, grass-roots-driven solutions and participation by youth representatives in Member States' delegations to the High-level Political Forum. The Economic and Social Council also continued to collaborate with key partners through its Partnership Forum and Multi-stakeholder Forum for Science, Technology and Innovation. The participants in the Partnership Forum emphasized the importance of developing a common set of core guidelines and principles on partnerships for the entire United Nations system.

Fourthly, the Economic and Social Council continued to strengthen its leadership role in identifying new issues and promoting reflection, debate and innovative and comprehensive thinking. In 2017, the Council devoted time to the issue of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 9 by organizing a special meeting and two preparatory events in Africa. That has resulted in the expansion of two concrete initiatives of the United Nations system for supporting infrastructure, industrialization and innovation — the Country Partnership Programme of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Accelerated Agriculture and Agro-industry Development Initiative, led by UNIDO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The President took the Chair.

The Economic and Social Council also worked to deepen our understanding of the nexus between peace and sustainable development, building on last year's joint meeting with the Peacebuilding Commission. The joint meeting on the situation in the Sahel underlined the importance of addressing the root causes of poverty while avoiding a disproportionate emphasis on security.

The comprehensive report discusses all of this in greater detail. On behalf of the 2017 Economic and Social Council Bureau, we would like to thank Member States and our partners in the United Nations development system for their continued strong collaboration and support. Under the guidance of its new President, Mrs. Marie Chatardová, I am sure that in 2018 the Economic and Social Council will build on the achievements of this session. We look forward to continuing its close working relationship with the General Assembly in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Sinha (India): We would like to congratulate the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on her assumption of the presidency of the Economic and Social Council and to assure her and the new Bureau of our steadfast support for their work. We would also like to take this opportunity to commend the outgoing President, the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe, and his Bureau for their stewardship of the Council's activities in the previous session. We thank the delegation of Chile for presenting the report of the Council (A/72/3) today.

India attaches great importance to the work of the Economic and Social Council and welcomes its 2017 report, which gives helpful details of its activities. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Economic and Social Council, with its well-planned working methods, has been able to give special attention to implementing and following up on the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and other related fields contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We note with appreciation its enhanced activities related to the 2030 Agenda, including organizing the Forum on Financing for Development follow-up, the segment on operational activities for development, the Partnership Forum, the integration segment and the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation, as well as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the special meeting of the Council on international cooperation in tax matters, the Youth Forum in New York, and the humanitarian affairs segment in Geneva, among others.

We would like to commend the Economic and Social Council for convening the High-level Political Forum, the second of its kind since the adoption of the 2030

Agenda. The Forum offered a place for policymakers from around the world to exchange ideas on how to accelerate the implementation of the far-reaching 2030 Agenda consistently and effectively. It included well-organized presentations of voluntary national reviews by 43 countries, including my own, as well as in-depth reviews of the progress that has been made on seven specific Sustainable Development Goals, and the adoption of a ministerial declaration on the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world".

India presented its voluntary national review in the spirit of sharing experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We have integrated the SDG framework into our national development strategies. India's success in sustaining robust economic growth aimed at eradicating poverty should make a major contribution to the global achievement of the SDGs. As it does, it will bring forth technologies and pathways for progress that can be shared with other developing countries in order to enable them to achieve sustainable development as well.

In a spirit of South-South solidarity, India continues to expand its development partnerships over a wide range of capacity-building sectors with fellow developing countries in various continents, especially those in more vulnerable situations. In June of this year we established the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund, with the aim of enhancing our contribution to South-South cooperation as a means to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We are happy to note that the theme for the next High-level Political Forum will be "From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities". It is our expectation that the Economic and Social Council will address sustainable development challenges through the prism of poverty eradication as its central and overarching objective. We also commend its effort in organizing the second Forum on Financing for Development follow-up, which provided a useful platform for substantive deliberations with representatives of intergovernmental bodies and the senior management of the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and which acknowledged the necessity for a wider and global framework for financing for development in the spirit of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

India has a historic association with the Economic and Social Council, whose first President was Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar, who played an important role in formulating the sections on it in the Charter of the United Nations. In line with its role as a large developing country, India has played an active role in the Council's deliberations and activities.

The architect of the Economic and Social Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters famously left it's ceiling unfinished, signifying that the work of development is never finished. While the United Nations development system entities are individually taking important steps to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into their work and programmatic instruments, a system-wide approach should be strengthened. We would like the Council to be more purposeful, action-oriented and policy-relevant. It should keep the interests of developing countries at the centre of its work, and its policy recommendations should lead to positive change on the ground and in the lives of ordinary people around the world.

Last but not least, as we plan various forums in this session, we would like to have a balance between the time allocated for panel discussions and that available for deliberations among Member States, or we will run the risk of making our processes academic, at the expense of the Council's ownership by Member States.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate India's commitment to the work and activities of the Economic and Social Council and to constructive engagement in its work in the coming months.

Mr. Alsharrah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to take note of the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/72/3). The various reports we have been presented with will help us to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, at every level.

Along with our various development partners, we had already made considerable progress on the Millennium Development Goals, enabling us to achieve sustainable development and economic growth. Tremendous efforts were made to achieve a successful outcome for the July 2015 third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa and to take into account the various changes our development plans have undergone, enabling us to move forward after September 2015 while taking into

consideration the national particularities and varying development levels of developing countries in the framework of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We also saw the holding of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, at which the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was adopted. There we worked to establish concrete measures to combat climate change based on the principle of collective responsibility and expressed our desire to work alongside other States to fulfil our obligations and ensure that no one is left behind.

This has been part of a process of consultation with all stakeholders with the aim of eradicating poverty in all its forms and aspects and to tackle that challenge, which is the most important one we face at the global level as we work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We are grateful to a number of Member States as well as to the entities and agencies of the United Nations, particularly the Economic and Social Council, of which we were a member from 2013 to 2015. We have seen various reforms in the Economic and Social Council that have made it possible for it to become a truly effective and equitable platform for Member States and for our efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, with significant effects for the results achieved. We hope that the Council will continue to make progress in that regard in the years to come, particularly through its High-level Political Forums, as well as in the context of the Forum on Financing for Development follow-up.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of continued cooperation for tackling the major challenges that prevent developing countries from assisting those in highly fragile social categories, especially States dealing with extremely difficult circumstances. It is essential to ensure that they too are given the opportunity to achieve prosperity. In that regard, all countries should share this responsibility in tackling these difficulties together. We must work together for sustainable development and ensure that developing countries have access to the sustainable and predictable financing that they need in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They need conducive conditions and new and innovative financing options to do so. Since the developed donor States have committed to providing such support and assistance to developing countries, we urge that they fulfil their commitment to allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to official development aid.

The State of Kuwait has made great efforts, especially under the leadership of Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals so that people all over the world can benefit from mechanisms and initiatives to eradicate poverty, reduce their debt — especially foreign debt — and combat the effects of climate change. It is essential that we continue to move forward on this path under the auspices of the United Nations. In that regard, we have a created the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, a groundbreaking step that has enabled us to help neighbouring States to achieve development and see genuine changes on the ground. We have also contributed to many international partnerships, a tradition for Kuwait, which has been at the forefront of joint development and humanitarian aid efforts for a long time.

We have therefore been advancing our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 by establishing a number of policies and measures aimed at fulfilling the Goals at the national level, based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have also integrated that effort into our various national strategies, including our new vision for "Kuwait 2035", a strategy designed to position Kuwait as a leading State on the cultural, social and economic fronts in our region by 2035. In that regard, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the vision he has outlined for reforming and revitalizing the work of the United Nations in order to enable it to help States around the world achieve stability and development. We firmly believe in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It can be achieved if we States show the necessary political will, work together and abide by our various commitments.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): The major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields have resulted in ambitious and transformative global development frameworks. My delegation sees their overarching objective as eradicating poverty and achieving inclusive and sustainable development growth while leaving no one behind. In that regard, they complement and reinforce one another in ensuring a prosperous and decent standard of living for all, while respecting development's three dimensions, economic, social and environmental.

Despite the uneven and mixed progress that has been made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we know that if we cannot overcome our current complex and interconnected challenges, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be met by 2030, particularly in the least developed countries. While we all agree, therefore, that adopting ambitious and universal master plans is the right way to go — and one that we still consider an achievement of multilateralism — if the international community cannot translate them into concrete actions, a major opportunity will be missed, with serious consequences for millions of people around the world, whose faith in the United Nations and in its States Members' capacity and willingness to deliver on collective promises would be undermined.

Without in any way underestimating the current problems we face, if the world recommits with the same optimism and political determination that it has demonstrated in endorsing the intergovernmentally agreed-on frameworks, it will indeed be possible to end poverty, combat climate change and mobilize sufficient resources. Moreover, what we achieved through the Millennium Development Goals can serve as lessons and inspiration for finishing our unfinished business. My delegation would therefore like to underscore that what we require is a genuine and revitalized global partnership and multi-stakeholder collaboration for the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

It will also be imperative to strengthen coordination and coherence in the follow-up to decisions taken by United Nations conferences and forums. In that regard, the ministerial declarations of the Second Forum on Financing for Development and the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development should be implemented to address the many gaps that remain in fulfilling the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, thereby creating an international environment more conducive to the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Developed countries should honour their commitments to providing sufficient financial assistance and transferring appropriate technologies for developing countries, particularly least developed countries, in order to complement national efforts. In addition, as a universal body, the United Nations has an important role to play in the full and timely implementation of our global development frameworks. My delegation would like to stress the importance of further enhancing synergy among United Nations entities and other global bodies, with the objective of supporting Member States in their efforts to implement the SDGs. In that regard, my delegation supports the Secretary-General's reform agenda, which we hope will further strengthen the development effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system, anchored in national ownership and leadership.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Economic and Social Council, contained in document A/72/3?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 9 and 14.

Agenda item 117

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Specific meeting focused on development

The President: In accordance with resolution 60/265, dated 30 June 2006, on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, a specific meeting focused on development should be held. I have been informed that no Member State has requested to take the floor under this item.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 117.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.30

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-second session

30th plenary meeting
Thursday, 12 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 14 and 117 (*continued*), 123 and 124

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/72/267 and A/72/271)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Note by the Secretary-General (A/72/271)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In connection with document A/72/271, members will recall a letter from the President of the General Assembly dated 25 September 2017 informing them of the commencement of the informal consultations process on a zero draft of the modalities resolution for the intergovernmental conference to adopt a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which is currently under way. Once the draft resolution has been finalized, it will be submitted for consideration by the Assembly.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the President for the reports that have been presented and for enabling us to have a dialogue on the follow-up to the international development summits. The interdependent and symbiotic relationship between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development is becoming increasingly clear, thanks to the new generation of universal and transformational agreements resulting from the various summits and conferences, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda and the recent Ocean Conference. We are entering the third year of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and many questions and challenges remain regarding their means of implementation, follow-up and review, which are ultimately our responsibility as Member States.

We also consider the restructuring of the United Nations development system to be as timely as it is essential for supporting Member States on their path to achieving their development goals. For the same reason, we believe that the initiatives for administrative reform and reform of the peace and security architecture that the Secretary-General has presented to members are the right thing to do and will make the work of the Organization more flexible and efficient generally. Reforming the system will be complex, because it involves normative, organic and operational changes at every level of the departments of the Secretariat and of the funds, programmes, specialized agencies and regional commissions, as well as in the functioning of the

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United Nations country teams. The system of resident coordinators will also be part of the adjustment of the Secretariat's functions and budgets. Rejuvenating the United Nations will require a more agile and effective Organization, and in particular it will require cohesion and unity of purpose in the tasks for each area and how they all relate to one another.

We are grateful for the Secretary-General's report (A/72/124) on reforms based on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, and we look forward to his next report, which will further examine the resident coordinator role and other aspects of the system with a view to making progress with reforms that will result in greater efficiency, transparency and accountability.

From a broader perspective, the collective awareness of States of the interdependence of the Organization's three pillars — peace and security, development and human rights — is clear. That is why Guatemala supports the Secretary-General's vision for prevention, because we firmly believe that investing more in prevention will prevent and mitigate social clashes and armed conflicts where they originate. In that regard, we share the Secretary-General's prevention-oriented vision and approach, which in our view can be summed up as more and better development, in which the concept of sustainable peace is the driving force behind policies and action for development. We therefore affirm the three pillars and the synergy between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustainable peace, as well as the link between humanitarian activities, development and peacebuilding, which constitute a solid and comprehensive basis for achieving the Organization's founding promise and the common goal we all share of saving future generations from the scourge of war.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have been closely studying the information being presented on the Secretary-General's proposals for reform of the United Nations in the areas of the Organization's peace and security architecture, development system and management. We understand the importance of adapting the Organization to the changing conditions and new realities of our time. Reforming a global organization is a continuing process. We believe firmly that the main goal of reforms should be to improve their practical effectiveness. We must avoid weakening the identity and specialties of the various entities of the United Nations. It is essential to avoid situations where the United Nations bodies that specialize in peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and development assistance invade one another's areas of responsibility. We must respect and observe the principle of the division of labour or we will be unable to avoid duplication of effort, which reduces effectiveness.

We understand the Secretary-General's desire to emphasize conflict prevention in his peace and security reforms. That is indeed an important principle. We believe that such efforts in the United Nations should be conducted only in strict recognition of the Charter of the United Nations, the principle of State sovereignty and the leading role of the Security Council. The fundamental principles of the international system in that area are affirmed in Security Council resolution 2171 (2014). However, the chief responsibility for preventing conflicts and dealing with their consequences rests with the States themselves.

In reforming the peace and security architecture, it is also important to take into account the fact that issues related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace are regulated by the landmark Security Council resolutions 1645 (2005) and 2282 (2016) and by related General Assembly decisions. They formulate a single definition of the term "sustaining peace" that is firmly tied to peacebuilding efforts and is the shared duty and responsibility of both Governments and the other stakeholders in national processes. There must be no expansive interpretation of the concept of sustaining peace that treats it as a new direction for the work of the United Nations. The Member States have never discussed, let alone agreed on, any plan of action or agenda in the area of sustaining peace.

The United Nations development system is a key element in its support to countries that need support in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It is important to ensure that the process of adapting it to new conditions is conducted within the framework of intergovernmental agreements as outlined in resolution 71/243, on the quadrennial comprehensive operational activities policy review. The review provides a clear and updated view of the principles on which the United Nations should base its activities in the foreseeable future. We believe that, as before, the area where the operational programmes and funds should apply their efforts should, as before, continue to be development itself. Their humanitarian assistance activities are regulated by the relevant decisions of Member States, including related participation in

humanitarian clusters under the auspices of the Office for the United Nations Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We are concerned about attempts to mandate the United Nations development system with the obligatory, if not almost predominant task of conflict prevention. That area is the responsibility of other United Nations Charter entities.

We also believe that it is unreasonable to directly link the implementation of resolution 71/243 with the transformation of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). While we do not deny that the Economic and Social Council and DESA play an important role in coordinating and supporting the activities of operational programmes and funds, our delegation nevertheless recalls that those are independent processes. We call for the adoption of coordinated decisions on these issues in the framework of the upcoming review of resolution 68/1, which is to take place at the current session.

We are also aware of the initiatives of the Secretary-General on the reform of the Organization's management system. Before proceeding to consider those initiatives, it is necessary to understand what has been accomplished to date. Without assessing the status of the implementation of previous projects in the field of management reform, it will be impossible to understand whether the Organization is heading in the right direction. We believe that strategic efforts should be aimed at defining the common goals and orientation of these reforms. Relevant proposals should contain clear indicators of achievements and detailed plans for the realization of benefits. It is obvious that any increase in expenditures is unacceptable for Member States, especially in the light of the current optimization of the United Nations budget. Any initiative should be based on clear mandates from the General Assembly.

We consistently advocate for transparency, efficiency and accountability in the work of the Secretariat. In that regard, we propose seeking opportunities for innovation in planning, budget formulation and staffing within the framework of the existing powers of the Secretary-General. It is necessary to observe all existing mandates in the transformation process, to provide Member States with full control over possible changes in the Organization, and to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the advantages and disadvantages and the benefits and costs of any innovation.

We are studying the report of the Secretary-General containing proposals for the transformation of the United Nations management system (A/72/492). We express our readiness to participate constructively in further discussions on the topic during the substantive part of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

The quality of interaction between States and the Secretariat, which is built on trust, determines the effectiveness of the work of the Organization. In that connection, we expect the Secretariat's reassessment of ongoing reforms to take into account the existing recommendations and criticisms voiced by many Member States, which are the consumers of the services of the Secretariat. It is on their support that the success of any initiative depends.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 14, 117, 123 and 124.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.31

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

31st plenary meeting
Monday, 16 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Statement by the President

The President: Before we begin, let me strongly condemn the terror attacks that took place in Mogadishu over the weekend. I want to express my deepest condolences to the people and the Government of Somalia. We stand in solidarity with them. I am outraged by the loss of so many innocent lives. This horrific incident further highlights the need for urgent action to prevent and counter all forms of terrorism, including by tackling its root causes.

Agenda item 114

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(d) Election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

The President: The General Assembly will now proceed with the election of 15 members of the Human Rights Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2017.

The 15 outgoing members are the following: Albania, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana, the Congo, El Salvador, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Latvia, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Paraguay, Portugal and Qatar.

In accordance with operative paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 60/251, of 15 March 2006, these Member States are eligible for immediate re-election, except those that have served two consecutive terms, namely, Botswana, the Congo, India and Indonesia.

The 15 vacant seats should be distributed among the regional groups as follows: three seats for the African States; four seats for the Asia-Pacific States; two seats for the Eastern European States; three seats for the Latin American and Caribbean States; and two seats for the Western European and other States.

In accordance with resolution 60/251, membership in the Council shall be open to all States Members of the United Nations, and the members of the Council shall serve for a period of three years. The members of the Council shall be elected directly and individually by secret ballot by the majority of the members of the General Assembly. Accordingly, 97 votes constitute a majority in the General Assembly, which has a membership of 193 States.

The following States will continue to be members of the Human Rights Council: Belgium, Brazil, Burundi, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iraq, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Panama, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The names of these States, therefore, should not appear on the ballot papers.

I remind delegations that the names of the following Member States should also not appear on the ballot

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papers, as they have served two consecutive terms and are therefore not eligible for this election: Botswana, the Congo, India and Indonesia.

The election will be held in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure of the General Assembly on elections. For this election, rule 92 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as recently amended by Assembly resolution 71/323, and rule 94 shall be applied. Accordingly, the election shall be held by secret ballot.

Consistent with the practice of the General Assembly, if more than the required number of Member States have obtained the votes of the majority of the members of the Assembly on the same ballot, those Member States that have obtained the largest number of votes above the required majority will be considered as elected, up to the number of seats to be filled. Also consistent with past practice, if, due to a tie vote, it becomes necessary to determine one candidate to be elected or that will proceed to the next round of restricted balloting, there will be a special restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to these procedures?

It was so decided.

The President: I have also been informed by the Secretariat that voluntary pledges and commitments made by Member States in accordance with operative paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 60/251 were accordingly issued as official documents of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

I should like to seek the usual cooperation of representatives during the time when the General Assembly is conducting elections and remind them that during the voting procedure, all campaigning should cease in the General Assembly Hall. This means that, once the meeting has begun, no more campaign material can be distributed inside the Hall. All representatives are also requested to remain at their seats so that the voting process can proceed in an orderly manner. I thank members for their cooperation.

I should also like to remind delegations to refrain from extending congratulations in the General Assembly Hall after the announcement of the elected members. This is disruptive to the distribution of ballot papers for any subsequent round of balloting. I thank members for your cooperation.

We shall now begin the voting process.

Ballot papers marked "A", "B", "C", "D" and "E" will now be distributed. Each ballot paper is assigned to one of the five regional groups. I request representatives to use only these ballot papers. In addition, ballot papers will be given only to the representative seated directly behind the country's nameplate.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/323, which sets out a new arrangement for ballot papers, the names of the candidates that have been communicated to the Secretariat prior to the election have been printed on the ballot papers for each of the regional groups. Also, additional blank lines corresponding to the number of vacant seats to be filled for each of the regional groups have been provided on the ballot papers for inscribing other names as necessary.

Representatives are requested to check the boxes next to the names of candidates that are printed on the ballot papers and/or write other eligible names on the blank lines. The total number of checked boxes and handwritten names may not exceed the number of vacant seats to be filled as indicated on the ballot paper. A ballot paper containing more votes than the number of vacant seats indicated on the ballot paper will be declared invalid.

Accordingly, for the ballot paper marked "A", for African States, the total number of checked boxes and handwritten names should not exceed four candidates; for the ballot paper marked "B", for Asia-Pacific States, the total number of checked boxes and handwritten names should not exceed four candidates; for the ballot paper marked "C", for Eastern European States, the total number of checked boxes and handwritten names should not exceed two candidates; for the ballot paper marked "D", for Latin American and Caribbean States, the total number of checked boxes and handwritten names should not exceed three candidates; and for the ballot papers marked "E", for Western European and other States, the total number of checked boxes and handwritten names should not exceed two candidates.

If a ballot paper contains one of the following names of Member States, the ballot remains valid but the vote for these Member States will not be counted: names of Member States that do not belong to the region concerned; names of Member States that are not eligible for re-election; and names of Member States that will continue to be members of the Council next year.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Bardijn (Belgium), Ms. Mohamed Didi (Maldives), Mr. Buttigieg (Malta), Ms. Sandoval (Nicaragua), Mr. Marcinek (Poland) and Ms. Mansouri (Tunisia) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group A — African States (4 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	193
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	193
Abstentions:	0
Number of members present and voting:	93
Required majority:	97
Number of votes obtained:	
Senegal	188
Angola	187
Nigeria	185
Democratic Republic of the Congo	151
Benin	1
Gambia	1
Guinea-Bissau	1

Group B — Asia-Pacific States (4 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	193
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	193
Abstentions:	1
Number of members present and voting:	192
Required majority:	97
Number of votes obtained:	
Nepal	166
Qatar	155
Pakistan	151
Afghanistan	130
Malaysia	129
Maldives	4
Fiji	2
Bhutan	1
Jordan	1
Tuvalu	1

Group C — Eastern European States (2 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	193
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	193
Abstentions:	3
Number of members present and voting:	190
Required majority:	97
Number of votes obtained:	
Slovakia	185
Ukraine	177
Estonia	1

Group D — Latin American and Caribbean States (3 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	193
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	193
Abstentions:	5
Number of members present and voting:	188
Required majority:	97
Number of votes obtained:	
Peru	180
Mexico	179
Chile	175

Group E — Western European and other States (2 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	193
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	193
Abstentions:	7
Number of members present and voting:	186
Required majority:	97
Number of votes obtained:	
Spain	180
Australia	176
Andorra	1
France	1
Greece	1

Having obtained the required majority and the largest number of votes of the members of the General Assembly, the following 15 States are elected members of the Human Rights Council for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January

2018: Afghanistan, Angola, Australia, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain and Ukraine.

The Acting President: I congratulate those States that have been elected members of the Human Rights Council, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in this election.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 114.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.